

WHEELS

VOLVO XC90 RANGE ROVER SPORT

GRAVEL TRAVEL!

#1 4X4 MAGAZINE IN SA

DRIVE OUT

Coastal bird paradise

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Motion sickness

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TANKWA KAROO

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**CHOOSE THE
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MICKEY THOMPSON



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THE LEGEND!

8 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE MICKEY THOMPSON

1 AMERICA'S SPECIALITY 4WD TYRE COMPANY

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- OFF-ROAD RACING TYRE SPECIALISTS

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4 SIDEWALL PROTECTION

- DEEP SIDEBITERS TAKE THE PUNISHMENT AND REDUCE SIDEWALL DAMAGE.
- MICKEY THOMPSON'S STAND UP STRAIGHTER COMPARED TO OTHER BRANDS, WHICH MEANS THEY ARE LESS PRONE TO DAMAGE.

5 LEADERS IN 4X4 TREAD TECHNOLOGY

- SIPES - ALL SIPES ARE WITHIN THE TREAD BLOCK TO REDUCE CHIPPING AND TEARING.
- MODERN TREAD PATTERN - LATEST DESIGNS HAVE HIGH VOLUME WATER CHANNELS TO CLEAR WATER QUICKLY.
- THE SIPE SHAPE REDUCES TREAD SQUIRM FOR BETTER GRIP AND FASTER STEERING RESPONSE.

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7 DEEP SIDEBITERS

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8 SPECIALITY SIZES

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THE A-Z OF BRAAIING

If you ask me I'd say that September isn't a special month at all. Here in the Cape it usually means one of two things: One, the cold hasn't really departed; and two, just as the warmer weather appears, so does the south-easter.

Well, that's if you disregard Braai Day. I have to congratulate Jan Braai with his initiative, because for years I've felt that we ought to formally recognise this important part of our heritage.

That's one of the reasons why we might as well call this issue the Braai Issue.

Strangely enough, we're not writing anything about braaiing meat itself – Lise Beyers has been doing a sterling job in that regard for the last couple of months. Rather, we decided to try and find the best braai wood and braai salt. It would probably be the equivalent of a rugby coach's "preparation" and "execution." Because if your wood is feeble you're going to struggle to braai, and if your seasoning isn't up to scratch, it's like knocking on the ball with an open try line in front of you.

Gerrie got hold of eight bags of diverse woods from all over South Africa and put them through scientific tests. I doubt if anyone else has tried to do this before!

Likewise, Charles, Evan and I got together one Friday to sample a selection of commonly available braai salts and spices. And yes, we just had to include that perennial favourite, Aromat. That yellow stuff has been around for almost as long as Victor Matfield, but just like the long-serving Bulls lock forward, it still commands some respect.

Evan set off for Lesotho in search of snow. He wasn't 100% successful in this regard, but if you can accurately predict Lesotho's weather, give me a call at the office before I go and buy Lotto tickets again.

For a change we have a nice Cape destination in the form of Charles' visit to the beautiful Tankwa Karoo. A lot of Cape out-



door lovers know this place, less than three hours' drive from home, and if you ever come holidaying in the south, do yourself a favour and visit the Tankwa.

Gerrie also attended the Koës Rally in Namibia. I went to the same event five years ago and it is interesting to see how much has changed through the years. And just for interest sake I have to mention that there are few places where Jägermeister tastes as good as on the stoep of the Koës Hotel late in the afternoon.

And then our Bush doc, the trauma specialist Dr Jacques Malan, tells you all you

need to know about motion sickness – also known as car or air sickness. It certainly isn't a feel-good subject, but just as you ought to make sure you have the right braai wood and spices, you also need to make preparations for this eventuality before you and your family head for the bush.

So buckle up and hold on. Here we go.

Jaco

PHRASE OF THE MONTH

COERT SMIT ON HIS NEW TOYOTA FORTUNER:

“I called her “VryStaat” because she’s like Free State rugby: Just when you feel like giving up, she surprises you with her best.”

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SEPTEMBER 2015

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WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORY! SEE P12.



Contributors

These two headed north



Eric Thorburn

SANDWICH HARBOUR, p. 83

Eric Thorburn visited Sandwich Harbour in Namibia and came back with a well-photographed story.

Tell us about one of your best travel memories

The time I hiked in the Himalayas with some friends and family must be one of my most unforgettable experiences.

What's your favourite place in the bush?

A wilderness trail in iMfolozi.

What's your number 1 travel tip?

Do your homework – read up and ask questions. It all adds to the anticipation.

So you plan ahead?

Very much so. The ideas and the planning are reasons why I love to travel to wild and wonderful places, and are just as important as the experience itself.

Which destination in Southern Africa is high on your list?

The Masai Mara, I'd like to see the wildebeest migration.

Do you have a favourite travel writer?

Not really a specific writer, no. I prefer travel and adventure magazines, such as *go!* and *Drive Out*, to name a few.

What music do you listen to on the road?

Light classics.



Aimee Bishop

DRIVE OUT'S SUB-EDITOR, AIMEE, WAS IN BOTSWANA AND NAMIBIA.

Tell us about your route

We took three days up and drove to Moremi via Namibia. We crossed into Botswana at the Mamuno border post and then just drove straight up to Moremi via Maun.

Did you see lots of game?

We saw a lot of wild dog, and even wild dog pups, and plenty of ellies.

We hear you met a considerate baboon

Yes! We made the mistake of thinking our camp site would be safe if we went on a game drive. A lone baboon decided to have some fun with our stuff, ripping some tent canvas. He took a liking to my very pink toiletry bag, but he unzipped it and left my pink shower gel in front of our tent for me before taking the bag up a tree.

How were the roads?

The gravel roads in Namibia were great. On Botswana's tar roads, you always have to watch out for the donkeys and cattle, but the dirt road from Maun to Moremi was quite badly corrugated and had some serious dongas.

And the weather?

Wonderfully warm by day but very cold at night. Apparently, due to a cold front in Cape Town.

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WINNING LETTER

A BIG FRIGHT IN MABUA

LATE VISITOR. Jan and his companions got such a fright when the leopard came into camp that no one had time to grab a camera.



Just as a previous article about lions in Mabua triggered memories for the Gous family from Benoni about their experience with leopards there "Spotted in Mabua" (*Drive Out* #90), so their letter reminded me of our experience a few years ago with a leopard in the same camp at the Mpayathutlwa pan. The difference is that our experience was a bit scarier, and could quickly have become a nightmare. Luckily, there was grace from above for us. We always thought that we were relatively alert when camping. But that day we were quickly brought down to earth.

We were camping there for five nights. During the first night the leopard came into our camp. It was some time around midnight when my wife whispered that there was something outside the tent. The next morning we could see the leopard prints.

The following evening, the fire was burning brightly. We were watching a spectacular sunset. At dusk, the women went to shower one by one. The tents were about 20 meters away from the showers, and it was still light.

Usually we set a watchman by the showers, especially when it's dark, but we let our guard down that evening.

My sister Magriet took a small lantern with her to the shower. The men were at the fire, and our friend Helga was preparing food at her tent. Helga suddenly said to Jan that Magriet was yelling about a leopard. Everyone jumped up and started looking about, but no one really knew where it was. Magriet shouted again, but now the calls were more urgent. Suddenly we realised they were coming from the direction of the shower.

We used our flashlights to shine on the shower in the dark, and we saw that the leopard was inside it! But where was Magriet? The next minute we saw her flying into her tent – with eyes as big as saucers.

After the initial shock, we watched the leopard drink and then begin to boisterously play, just like a house cat would. She paid no attention to us at all. But the next moment she decided she'd played enough and charged at us. Like lightning everyone dived for their tents and vehicles.

Jan couldn't get into his tent fast enough, because Magriet had already

firmly closed it. He jumped into his Defender, not realising that all the windows were open. And a Defender's windows don't close quickly, especially when you're looking over your shoulder for a leopard. Everything happened so fast that no one had time to grab a camera. The leopard sniffed around our camp and made herself comfortable under the A-frame. I remembered my small camera in the tent and tried to take pictures of her, but didn't get anything amazing.

When the leopard left, everyone tentatively came out of their hiding spots. Magriet told us what happened. She had finished showering and was getting ready to walk back to camp. When she looked to the right with her lantern, she was staring right into the eyes of the leopard, about 4 meters away from her. She saw that the leopard was calm, and slowly began to step out the shower and move away from it, calling to us. As she moved away, the leopard stepped into the shower and drank the water. Apparently it was just waiting for her to finish so that it could get a drink.

The next night, we were more alert and considerably closer to the camp. The next moment some of the women jumped into their tents because of two eyes shining in the bush. It turned out to be a jackal coming to visit.

Two nights later two large male lions came through our camp, but this time we were ready, because we could hear them coming. The two lions were out on patrol and very focused. Needless to say that after this, we stood guard religiously when people showered – even during the day.

We still do. We learnt in Mabua that you can never let your guard down.

JAN WOLMARANS
Bellville



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THE SCOUNDREL ON YOUR CAMP SITE



My friend Gert Coetzee and I have also had a run-in with camp scoundrels. In Mabua in April 2014, to be precise. I invited Gertjie (from Meyerton) on a trip there after everything had been booked with much difficulty through Gabs. We spent the first night sleeping over at Mabua pan. The next day we had to drive back to the gate and we got back to our camp site in the late afternoon.

What did we find there? A

big oaf with his dome tent pitched under the A-frame. He was sitting calmly on a camp chair with a brandy in his hand – on our booked site! We confronted him and his reaction was: "Sort it out with the camp staff, they said that I could camp here." Gert offered to go sort it out at the gate. I went with him, and the story at the gate was that they had made a double booking, and I accepted their explanation.

Gert was much more stubborn about it than me. Back at the camp, he put his foot down and said "This is our camp site and this guy must move!" He explained this to the invader in no uncertain terms, and we turned and drove back once again to the office. Now Gert was in control and he told the staff exactly how matters stood and that we did not want that guy on our camp site.

We drove back again to the women at camp and drank a lekker cold beer. Shortly after this, the lout came back, accompanied by some of the staff, and began to take down his tent to go find another place to camp!

What is the moral of the story? Don't let camp scoundrel's get away with their behaviour! Do your homework, and if necessary, go through the difficulties of booking a place, even if us campers don't always want to be tied down.

JAN STEENKAMP
Modder River, Northern Cape

BAD ETIQUETTE IN THE BAVIAANS

I read with interest the article on camp etiquette (*Drive Out* #91). When reading the article "A Different view of Baviaans" I was shocked to read that Theresa pours water over rock art to get a better view. Clearly they don't know the etiquette of viewing rock art. One of the quickest ways to destroy it is by wetting it so that it becomes more visible. I find this behaviour as unacceptable, if not as reprehensible, as any of those discussed in the article on camp etiquette. It is little wonder that land owners are reluctant to share the locations of rock art when people display this kind of behaviour.

DES MUNRO
Sedgefield

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GOOD SAMARITANS IN NAMIBIA

In May, the six Van Dijks (three brothers, a sister and two spouses) had the privilege to experience the charity of Namibians. We were on our way to our Bhejane Desert Rivers of Kaokoland tour when we were struck by bad luck.

On the Sunday we were about 10 km west of Gobabis, on route to Windhoek, when our brother-in-law Johan's Fortuner lost a wheel, while travelling at 120 km/h. Luckily he could bring the Fortuner to a standstill on three wheels. The back left wheel ran off into the veld, over a train track and came to a standstill at a wire fence. I decided to go and find help at a Toyota garage in Gobabis.

The emergency number on the window just went to voicemail. We went to ask for advice at the guest house where we had stayed the previous night, and Kobus and Sheryl called everyone they knew. Eventually they tracked down Jaco Redelinghuys of Toyota Gobabis, who promised that someone was on their way to the garage. They also phoned Pottie of Potties Towing, in order to send a tow truck.

We barely got back to the three-legged Fortuner when Pottie's son Dawie arrived and very calmly assessed the damage, shaking his head. Then Pottie himself arrived with the flatbed truck and, taking out his high-lift jack, had the Fortuner back on four wheels, with two bolts on the crippled one. Dawie carefully fastened the Fortuner on the back of the flatbed truck and Pottie took it back to Gobabis.

At the garage, Jacques and Rudolf were waiting for us. Rudolf told us that there was more damage than what they had initially thought, and they didn't have the parts in stock. They would only arrive on Wednesday – which was the same day our tour was to begin.

We started (on a Sunday!) to look for a vehicle to hire and found Johan Thuynsma of Camel 4x4 hiring. He could help. Dawie offered to take the stranded passengers and all their baggage to Windhoek! There we were welcomed with typical Namibian hospitality. We were asked about the accident and given a brand new Toyota Hilux 4x4 bakkie, with raised suspension and with big, thick, off-road tyres. Johan

doesn't usually hire out his bakkies for Van Zyl's Pass and Purros, because people, especially foreigners, don't know much about rock and sand driving. But Ouboet explained to him that we weren't planning on damaging the other vehicles we were driving with, and that his brother was a careful and responsible driver. Besides, we were driving with a proper, experienced guide from Bhejane. Thus his bakkie was in good hands. Johan was satisfied with this explanation and even gave us a bunch of delicious game droëwors. From there we were on our way to Otjiwarongo, with a warning from Johan to be on the lookout for warthogs – they like to wander onto the roads at dusk.

All's well that ends well! We had two wonderful days at Okaukuejo before we met up with the Bhejane tour group at Kamanjab, ready for action. We're glad that we learned there are still people out there who care about others.

MARTHELLA VAN DIJK
Pretoria

... AND MORE DO-GOODERS

You get helpful and warm-hearted people in Botswana. We were there in May this year with our friends Johan and Else de Villiers on our annual tour to our neighbouring countries.

We booked a place at Mabuasehube and stopped on the road between Sekomo and Werda for something to eat. Suddenly the Disco 3 smelled like something burnt.

We suspected that it was the alternator.

We were standing, hopelessly looking at the open engine when a Good Samaritan in a BMW stopped next to us. We were greatly surprised when the owner of Sekomo's fuel depot offered to help.

Stefan Eloff immediately confirmed that the alternator had burned out. While he arranged for the part to be delivered from Gaborone via taxi, he allowed us to spend

the night camping under the camel thorn trees in his garden. The part arrived the next day and his two workmen replaced it for us then and there. We could sleep that same night in Mabua.

How can we ever thank Stefan and Adri Eloff enough?

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Ranger snapping at the heels of the Hilux

The Ford Ranger has been the top selling model for three consecutive months – April, May and June – across all vehicle segments in South Africa. The bakkie outsold the Toyota Hilux, its closest rival, which had been the top seller in February and March and the overall best selling vehicle of 2014.

However, Toyota still holds the crown as the overall month to month best selling brand since the start of the year, according to statistics from the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of

South Africa (Naamsa).

The second and third places alternate each month between Ford and Volkswagen.

Toyota, Lexus and Hino all recently received gold awards at the National Automobile Dealers Association's (Nada) annual Dealer Satisfaction Index Awards. Dealerships rated Toyota as the overall winner in the category for passenger and light commercial vehicles. Nada has been rating South African dealerships' satisfaction with automotive brands since 2003.

BRIGHT IDEA

Leather to the rescue

We recently undertook a 31 day, 8000km long tour through Angola and Namibia. Just before Epupa Falls in Namibia my front brakes failed.

I bought a raw piece of leather from a Himba woman, cut it to the correct size and stuck it onto the steel brake pad.

That piece of leather lasted over Van Zyl's Pass,

through Kaokoland and onwards to Sesfontein. It was a whole 595 km! In Sesfontein I replaced it with another piece to reach Hentiesbaai where I could finally repair the brakes.

It was a smart idea that saved our behinds in the bundu!

**JOHAN VAN DER
MERWE,
Langebaan**



Johan used a raw piece of leather to do emergency repairs to his bakkie's brakes.



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Tips on how to write your "My Fortuner and I" story in a jiffy:

1. How long have you had your Fortuner?
2. What do you think makes a Fortuner better?
3. Tell us more about how you bought the Fortuner – is it new or second hand? Did any funny or interesting things happen while purchasing it?
4. How did it feel the first time you got into your Fortuner?
5. What have you had done

to your Fortuner? Tell us about all the modifications and why you made them.

6. Where have you been with your Fortuner? What were the best destinations you've travelled to? Tell us more about these trips. How far did you drive? What did you experience there? How did the Fortuner cope? Were there any funny events that occurred?
7. Does your Fortuner have a name? How was that chosen?

Tell us more about yourself in a separate paragraph with the following important information:

1. Name and surname
2. Where do you live?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is the odometer reading on your Fortuner, and if you bought it second hand, how many km have you done?
5. What specific model of Fortuner do you drive?



Send your story and photos via e-mail to editor@driveout.co.za and mark it clearly as #TellBetterStories.

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FIND US ON





The resurrection of **OOMPIE PIET**

This **Ford Fordor** is more than just a dirty joke – it's a beast ready to chomp down on its competitors.

Four guys with agricultural backgrounds, Jan Geldenhuys, Hannes van Rensburg, Johan Koekemoer and Karl Markram, are bringing a unique car to this year's Bull Run. And as befits any interesting vehicle, this one's story starts in a store room on a farm.

What vehicle are you bringing to the Bull Run?

We are coming in a 1949 Ford Fordor sedan. These cars were the first series of new models released after the Second World War. The 1946 to 1948

models were based on cars from before the war. It has a 3,9litre Flathead V8-low revving engine. I had it restored last year especially for the Bull Run.

Where did you find this car?

In the early 1970's my brother bought the car from my grandfather's estate with the idea that he would play around with it on the farm. After my brother's death in 1984 I inherited the Ford. Since then it has been sitting in a store room for 30 years. I spent about R11 000 to get the Ford in working condition and make it

roadworthy again for the rally.

Does the Ford have a nickname?

Yes, we call it Oompie Piet, for two reasons: Firstly, my grandfather's brother was named Piet Geldenhuys. And secondly, there is an old Afrikaans joke about Oompie Piet, "*Die disselboom van Potchefstroom*". But that joke is way to dirty to tell in public!

What is your theme?

"Eishkom." We are going to take the mickey out of Eskom and the current electricity crisis.

What made you decide to take part?

I read about the Bull Run in *Drive Out*. This year my vehicle was finally mechanically sound enough to get to the event in Vosburg.

What's under the hood?

When I inherited the Ford, it already had an alternator installed. We have since replaced the brakes and put in a new exhaust system and shocks. Bridge-stone was kind enough (thanks to my team mate Hannes van Rensburg) to sponsor a new set of tyres for the Ford. If I had to take a guess, I'd say the car gets about 6 kilometres per litre. But I haven't measured it yet. It drives so *lekker* that it's still a bargain.

How are you getting to Vosburg and who's coming with you?

We are leaving the Wednesday before the event from Lichtenburg and travelling via Kimberly. We are driving in a convoy with at least three support vehicles. Oompie Piet is a senior citizen so we are planning to sleep over en route. Apart from the four of our team members there are at least three supporters, amongst whom is my wife Deirdré and Hannes' wife, Ina. But the group might grow as news spreads that we are taking part in the Bull Run. That's the way things go in small towns.

What are you looking forward to most?

We are most looking forward to the regulated rally. We are driving an old vehicle, but we can still show the other guys a thing or two. The Ford Fordor is still a beast.

Will you try and win?

We are actually just coming to the Bull Run to enjoy the whole weekend. Fun is the main reason for participating and competition comes second. And of course we want to show off with the old man! 🏆

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FIND US ON





BY MIC VAN ZYL



Which is the RIGHT TYRE FOR YOU?

Fitting a new set of tyres to your 4x4 is not just about what looks cool. There's a lot more to consider, says **MIC VAN ZYL**.

As with the majority of 4x4 equipment, it's easy to be overwhelmed by all the information and advertising hype surrounding different tyre types and brands.

I was perplexed recently about what tyres to fit to my FJ Cruiser when they needed replacing. I spent an inordinate amount of time investigating, comparing and speaking to four-wheel drive owners, tyre merchants and 4x4 experts. In the end, I was no closer to making an informed decision.

I did come to one conclusion though. There's a lot of opinion out there based on very little evidence. Furthermore, you can get both good and bad ratings for just about every brand and tyre model on the market.

Eeny, meeny, miny, moe...

There's a string of AWD and four-wheel drive vehicles around, and several types of tyres for them. The important thing to consider is their intended purpose: highway-biased tyres for mom's SUV that's used for school runs,

high performance highway tyres for big, fast luxury SUVs, all-terrain tyres that are good for most surfaces (but slightly compromised), tyres for rock climbing, tyres for mud and snow, tyres with extra plies for puncture resistance, the list goes on and on.

More than one tyre merchant confirmed something I had suspected: Far too many people

base their tyre purchase on the wrong reasons.

Big, aggressive mud tyres certainly look impressive on a lifted 4x4. But while they are great in mud and snow, handling will be severely compromised at high speeds on a highway in wet conditions. If you drive mostly in town and on the highway, with a bit of gravel over weekends and holidays, these tyres are not for you.

Another problem is buying cheap tyres. Good tyres cost a lot of money, but they are the very last things that you can afford skimp on. People forget what an important role tyres play in driving safely. Compromising on that just isn't worth it.

And the winner is...

Working for a four-wheel drive company, my FJ is kitted out with all our gear. Though I'm saddened to admit that I don't go off-road as often as I'd like to anymore. I spend a lot of time on the road visiting dealers. And a lifted, kitted out 4x4 needs all the help it can get in the handling department. I am, however, very fortunate not to have to pay for the tyres myself, so tread life isn't such a huge consideration for me. My most important criterion for tyre choice is wet weather handling and resistance to aquaplaning.

So, after some careful consideration, I made my choice. I eventually got a set of all-terrain tyres from a leading tyre company, since they ticked all the above boxes and suited my needs perfectly.

I had explained to people what I needed and fitted the tyre that got the best feedback from the most people that I spoke to on the topic. I suggest you try the same when choosing tyres. It's important to purchase the correct tyre for the right reason, and always keep safety in mind. 🚗

Mic van Zyl is the general manager of Ironman 4x4 Africa, the sole importer and distributor of Ironman 4x4 products.

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FIND US ON





AN EYE ON THE BALL AND THE GAME

If you're too focused on one obstacle, you could forget about everything else. And the penalty for that may be buckled vehicles and broken bones, warns **ALAN GOODWAY**.

Target fixation, also known as white-line fever, is a big issue when driving off-road.

It happens when your brain is focused so intently on one object that you become less aware of other obstacles and hazards around you.

Target fixation can cause collisions, and a lot of rear-end crashes happen this way: The driver's eyes lock onto the red brake lights of the vehicle in front. They become so focused on it that they panic, completely forget to avoid the object and slam into it.

Fixing your fixation

Drivers need to develop a constantly adaptive mental image of the surrounding environment, especially when travelling on gravel roads.

It's normal for a vehicle to lose traction and move around

on gravel, especially at speed. Thus, the need to be aware of the surroundings – turns and camber, dips, potholes and washouts – is vital.

Don't just concentrate on the 20 metres ahead of your vehicle. A driver must see the "bigger picture" – the whole road ahead and its surrounds.

In Africa, animals wander on and off the road, especially

around water, so it's important to mentally plan an escape route around any possible trouble in your way.

Big trees on the side of the road and oncoming trucks also require mental notation. While the tree won't move, it could be in your way if you need to swerve for something else. A truck, on the other hand, is a moving obstacle that you

need to monitor. If it suddenly swerves into your path, you need to have an escape route planned already.

But don't fixate on the truck either. This is especially important at night, when our vision is greatly reduced and a set of headlights becomes the most easily available target.

Driving on difficult, rocky terrain is the same. If you focus too intently on each individual rock, you can't develop a rhythm for the course and anticipate the best line of travel. Then you end up bouncing from one obstacle to the next, and sometimes even crash into that rock, at great expense!

Smooth sailing

Once you've developed this ability, the journey becomes smoother and safer. Anticipation and forward planning lets you make the necessary judgments to deal with surprises.

It may sound tiring, but it's actually a better and more relaxing way to travel. Target fixation is stressful and makes you focus on negative imagery. But by developing a keen sense of your route and the environment, you will begin to understand and control it. Then you can relax that white-knuckle grip on the steering wheel and enjoy the ride.

Whether you drive in tight traffic, on long back roads or over rocky four-wheel drive tracks, the art of seeking out positive, rather than negative, targets will help make you a better driver. 🚗

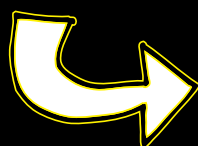
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December 2015	2 & 6 Dec	12 & 13 Dec	

For queries and bookings, call Alan on ☎ 082 603 8321 or e-mail ✉ 4x4offroad@mweb.co.za.

In **Gauteng**, courses are offered at Leriba Lodge in Centurion (theory) and Kungwini 4x4 near Bronkhorstspuit (practical). In the **Western Cape**, the theory and practical are covered in one weekend at Bowtime in Brackenfell and Welgelegen 4x4 near Stellenbosch. In **KwaZulu-Natal**, it all happens at the Highstakes 4x4 facility in the Shongweni Valley.



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■ PRACTICAL:

This takes place on an accredited obstacle course with 12 obstacle types, and concludes with a performance assessment, based on the Unit Standard Requirements. Results are submitted to TETA for moderation.

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- Introduction to 4x4 vehicle and vehicle dimensions
- Safety Equipment and usage
- Basic Recovery Equipment Identification
- Preparing a vehicle for off-road driving
- Drive Train, Suspension, Locks & Hubs
- Vehicle Preparation (Internally and Externally)
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LEVEL 1 TRAINING COSTS

R1 750 per person (Group Training | 6 – 10 learners)

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THE LEVEL 2 TRAINING requires more experience. To qualify for this Certificate of Competence, the Level 1 training must be successfully completed.

THE COURSE TYPICALLY COVERS

- A recap of Level 1
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- Tyre Repair, Tyre Changing Fundamentals & Safety
- Jacking and Winching (including a variety of jacks & winching techniques)
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FOR QUERIES AND BOOKINGS call Alan on ☎ 082 603 8321 or e-mail ✉ 4x4offroad@mweb.co.za



SNORKELS

WHAT ARE THEY REALLY FOR?

Some guys think that a **snorkel turns your 4x4 into a submarine**, others insist it's only cosmetic. **Charles Thompson** found out what a snorkel actually does.

Like so many other inventions, snorkels were originally designed for use in warfare. The first types of vehicles to use snorkels were army tanks. In order to drive through deep water these tanks used a longer air intake with a filter on top. Then a bunch of brains in Australia decided to adapt the technology and designed a snorkel for 4x4s.

How does it work?

A normal air intake sits inside the engine bay, usually above one of the wheel arches. A snorkel is basically just an extension of this pipe. However, it goes outside the engine bay through a hole in the body instead. Then it's fitted high against the outside of your vehicle, usually at the front by the A-pillar.

But don't think it means that

your engine can go diving. "People think a snorkel means you can now drive through any river crossing," says Mic van Zyl, general manager at Ironman 4x4. "But if you want to do that, you actually need to seal a lot of other components in your engine."

He says a snorkel will help to prevent your engine from swallowing water through the air intake, but a snorkel won't stop

water from getting into your engine completely.

According to Mic, the primary purpose of a snorkel is, in fact, to keep dust and dirt out of your engine.

"Have a look at the amount of dust in your wheel arches after a section of dirt road. Now you can just imagine how much dust gets into your engine bay when you drive.

"By lifting the air intake high

above the engine and wheels, you keep a lot of dust out. That means your air filter won't clog up so quickly. If your engine struggles to take air in, it works harder. And if it works harder, it uses more fuel."

Paul van Pletzen, a mechanical engineer and 4x4 enthusiast, agrees that the main purpose of a snorkel is cleaner air. "The cleaner the air that goes into the snorkel, the better it is for the engine."

He agrees with Mic. "The story about snorkels allowing you to drive through deep water is a gimmick. If you really want to drive through rivers, you have to seal your entire engine, especially the electronics. A snorkel simply prevents water from getting in through the air intake."

Keeping it cool

Another advantage of a snorkel, says Paul, is the temperature of the air that reaches the engine through it. The air around a standard intake in the engine bay can get pretty hot, especially if you've been driving up and down the dunes all day in low range. The air coming in through the snorkel is further away from the engine's heat.

"Cool air has a higher density than hot air, and the denser the air, the more oxygen it carries. So the cool air through the snorkel gives you better combustion and therefore better consumption," he explains.

Mic says Ironman tested this correlation in some experiments in Australia. First, they drove a 3,2litre Ford Ranger over a measured distance and time without a snorkel, while technicians monitored the air pressure and temperature. Then they did the same using a Ranger with a snorkel. The result: The air temperature is 3-5 °C cooler at the snorkel's intake than the standard intake in the engine bay.

The temperature of the air that reaches your engine will have an impact on its performance. On a hot day in the

On a hot day in the dunes, 3-5 °C can make a few kilowatts' difference.



BRAIN DRAIN. Drainage gaps in the snorkel head allow the water that enters during rain to escape.



PASSING THROUGH. The air that enters at the top of the snorkel reaches the engine's air intake chamber through this coupling (next to the arrow).

A MASK FOR YOUR SNORKEL

When driving through dense, high grass, consider putting a thin stocking over the snorkel's intake. It will keep a lot of grass and seeds out of the system.

dunes, 3-5 °C could make a few kilowatts' difference.

Things that go bump

Paul says a snorkel could also increase the temperature of the air that runs through it. This is because a snorkel creates more friction between the air molecules. And when these molecules bump against each other, it creates heat.

"You have to keep four things in mind: The distance the air has to travel to the engine, the amount of air in the pipe, the bends in the pipe and the inner surface of the pipe."

You get two types of air flow, the engineer explains – laminar and turbulent. Laminar flow is when the air travels in a straight line, "almost like people walking into a train station in a row." Turbulent flow is when the air flows in a disorderly, swirling fashion, almost like people trying to run through the platform gates from every direction.

"The air outside gets disrupted by the movement of the vehicle. Air that was travelling horizontally is suddenly forced to travel vertically down a pipe. This causes turbulence. Now the air has to travel down the pipe and around a few bends. And if the inner surface is dirty or a bit coarse, the air flow is disrupted further. All these factors cause friction."

But the amount of friction created in this process is negligible, he says. And the advantage of the cool air reaching the engine from outside the bay far outweighs the slight increase in air temperature through the pipe delivering it.

Ironman's Ranger tests also indicated this. The temperature of the air reaching the turbo's intake through the snorkel was slightly higher than the air delivered through the standard intake. But this was after a short drive while the engines were still cool.

Headwind or tailwind?

If you've ever driven in convoy on a dirt road, you'll know

KEEP THIS IN MIND

Is it going to fit? A snorkel's head could stand almost 20 cm higher than your vehicle's roof. If your vehicle is already quite high, do your measurements carefully, especially if you park in the average suburban garage, before you fit a tall snorkel.

Less vision. Realise that snorkel, which runs up the A-pillar, negatively affects your view from behind the wheel when driving. Keep this in mind, as this creates a blind spot which could lead to tragic consequences if you do not compensate for it.

INSTALL IT WELL

Buy a quality product and have it installed by someone who knows what he's doing. A snorkel isn't a moving part, but it's definitely a working one, and one that is exposed to the elements all the time. The quality and thickness of the plastic is important, as is the strength of the couplings. A low quality product will soon start to crack and break.

And remember, they're going to drill a big hole in your vehicle's body during installation, and this will expose some raw metal. Find someone who'll work carefully and prevent rust from taking hold. Mic recommends that a primer and some chip paint be applied around the hole to protect the exposed metal.



HEAD GAMES. The snorkel's direction doesn't affect performance, so you can turn it backwards to prevent clogging, when, for instance, driving in heavy snow.

how much dust a bunch of 4x4s can kick up. A snorkel's intake usually points forward, but some drivers turn it around when they drive through dust or grassy plains so that it points away from the dust or seeds flying through the air. But could this make your snorkel less efficient because it will struggle to take air in?

Paul says the slight advantage you gain from the ramming effect, which is when air gets "rammed" into a snorkel pointing forward, is minimal. Mic agrees.

"I turned my snorkel's head around on my last trip to Lesotho to keep the snow out, and I've actually forgotten it was turned the other way!"


He recommends that you keep it in the standard position and only turn it around when it's absolutely necessary, e.g. in heavy snow. But, he says, the

position of the head doesn't have any noticeable impact on engine performance.

"The ramming effect people talk about probably makes a slight difference, but not enough to feel it."

Sold down river

Paul drives an old Pajero and says he's done lots of research on buying a snorkel for his long trips. "But all the guys I've spoken to on forums and the internet say the same thing – if you want to cross a river, buy a boat! I've taken a 380 km detour not to cross a river, but I'd rather do that again than drive through deep water."

"I see some guys going in until almost nothing but the snorkel sticks out, but I'm sure the other components in their engines are also sealed. A snorkel alone is only there to give you cleaner, cooler air." 



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MOTION SICKNESS STOP IT IN ITS TRACKS

Hanging out the bakkie window all the way to Moremi is nobody's idea of a fun holiday. **DR JACQUES MALAN** explains what causes motion sickness and how you can avoid it, or at least treat it, when the floodgates open.

Motion sickness, sometimes referred to as car or sea sickness, is a very common disturbance of the inner ear caused by repeated motion. Anyone can develop motion sickness, but since some people are more sensitive to movement than others, they are more likely to get car sick.

Motion sickness most commonly affects children between 2 and 12 years of age, pregnant women and people who are prone to migraines. You see it often in people hanging over the sides of ships or boats, especially in choppy waters, but motion sickness can also develop from the movement of a car or from turbulence in an aeroplane, also usually in stormy, turbulent weather.

What causes motion sickness?

Motion sickness is thought to occur when there's a conflict between what your eyes see and what your inner ears, which help with balance, sense.

As you move around, your brain holds details about where you are and how you are moving. It constantly updates this with information from your eyes and vestibular system – a network of nerves, channels

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Being able to recognise the symptoms of motion sickness could be the difference between messing up your car seats and pulling over in time. If you show one or more of the following signs, ask the driver to pull over:

- A hollowness in your stomach (“that sinking feeling”)
- Cold, clammy and generally unwell
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Unusual sweating

“Motion sickness is thought to occur when there’s a conflict between what your eyes see and what your inner ears sense.”

and fluids in your inner ear which gives your brain a sense of motion and balance.

If there's a mismatch of information between these two systems, your brain struggles to figure out if you're moving or standing still, and even if it does

realise you're moving, it often can't compute how fast you're going. The resulting confusion could then lead to symptoms of motion sickness, such as nausea and vomiting.

Let's take the example of sitting in a car. Your eyes

are telling your brain that you're travelling at a speed of 120km/h, but your vestibular system is sending it information that you're sitting still. This conflicting information could send your brain into a tail spin. And then you end up feeding the flowers.

Keep this in your medical kit

There are two types of medication when it comes to motion sickness – those that prevent it and those that relieve the symptoms. Keep both in your medical kit, but check with your doctor before using any of them. Some medication for motion sickness makes you drowsy, others can cause blurred vision and some of them just don't work.

Preventative medicines:

- 1. Anticholinergic agents** – for example Scopolamine. You can find this in patch or tablet form, but both have significant side effects like dizziness, drowsiness, or blurred vision.
- 2. Antihistamines** – for example Cinnarizine (found in Stugeron) and Promethazine (in Phenergan). Cinnarizine is a widely prescribed medicine that has to be taken 1 hour before departure. But don't drive after you've taken this! It can make you extremely drowsy.

Symptom-relieving medicine:

- 1. Ondansetron** – this is good for nausea and vomiting caused by motion sickness but doesn't prevent it.
- 2. Maxolon (Metoclopramide)** – this medicine helps to move food through your digestive system more quickly. And that helps stop you from feeling sick.
- 3. Ginger** – many people believe in ginger as a natural remedy for stomach ailments. Its effectiveness hasn't been proven scientifically but some people swear by it.

And lastly, take along some sickness bags. It's better than using your Toyota cap! 🚗

GO WITH THE FLOW

You can't always stop motion sickness, but the following tips can help you prevent or at least lessen its severity when it does happen. Try these tips before and while you travel.

1 Eat right. If you know you're going to be travelling in a vehicle, plane or boat, watch what you eat and drink the night before (and during the trip).

Don't drink too much alcohol and stay away from foods and drinks that generally don't agree with you or make you feel unusually full. Heavy, spicy or fatty foods could mess with your stomach before a journey even starts and makes motion sickness worse in some people.

2 Get fresh air. Open a vent or source of fresh air whenever possible and avoid strong food odours in the vehicle – it could help prevent nausea. If you're on a boat, don't sit close to the outboard motors where the fumes are strong.

3 Position yourself. Try to choose a seat where you'll experience the least motion. The middle of an aeroplane, over the wings, is the calmest area on the plane. On a ship, those in the lower level cabins near the centre of the ship are usually more stable than those in higher or outer cabins. Don't sit facing backwards from your direction of travel and sit in the front seat of a car whenever possible.

4 Watch where you look. Don't read while travelling if you're prone to motion sickness. And when traveling by car or boat, it can sometimes help to keep your gaze fixed on the horizon or on a fixed point if you start to feel sick.

5 Don't get “infected”. If there are people around you who are suffering from motion sickness, try to sit away from them. Hearing people talk about motion sickness or seeing someone become ill can make you feel ill yourself.

WHEELS

News flash



TOYOTA FORTUNER

Finally a new Fortuner!

Shortly after the release of the new Toyota Hilux, the new Fortuner will be available in Thailand in the near future. However, it will only come to South Africa in the second quarter of 2016.

Just like the Hilux, the next Fortuner will be a completely new vehicle. According to the brains at Toyota, the handling and ride comfort have been improved by new multi-link suspension on the rear wheels. Interestingly enough, the new model won't have full-time four-wheel drive anymore. Instead, its default setting will be rear-wheel drive, which can be adjusted to 4x4 using a dial in the cabin.

The new 2,4 and 2,8 litre turbo diesel engines of the Hilux will be used in the Fortuner as well. The rest of its specifications will only be available closer to its local launch.



The latest model in the Range Rover series, the SVAutobiography, is now available from Range Rover dealers. One of the biggest changes with this model, which will replace the Autobiography Black, is the powerful, turbo-charged V8 petrol engine. This bad boy develops 405 kW and 680 Nm of torque. The same engine is used in the superfast Range Rover SVR, with just a tad less power.

But that's where the differences end. The only others are the black roof, a change to the Range Rover lettering on the bonnet and a slight update to the grill.

This Range Rover has lots of new toys which include a 360° camera system and a sensor under the rear to open the tailgate with the swing of a foot. (*Dancing behind your Range Rover, might cause the tailgate to pop open, though. – Jaco*) 📷

PHOTOS: PROVIDED

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Agile Englishman

Last month we featured the Range Rover Vogue, this month **Gerrie van Eeden** gets into its faster cousin, the Range Rover Sport.



COMPUTER. If you forget to lower the suspension, the computer will drop it automatically to a safe height. If the vehicle is standing off-kilter, the air suspension will automatically balance it out so that it's level.

LOTS OF GO. The SDV6 turbo diesel engine develops a respectable 215kW, but the 600Nm is what makes you take notice.

RUNNING SHOES. The relatively low profile tyres will probably not last long on gravel roads, but in sharp corners on tar it sticks like glue. There is also a built in tyre pressure monitor which alerts you if the pressure in the tyres gets a little low.

LOW RANGE-LESS. Lack of a low range gear box may count against the Range Rover Sport, but it makes up for it with brute strength which reaches a top speed of 210 km/h.

RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV6 SE

Driving the Range Rover Sport is similar to leaving your favourite chocolate lying in the sun. It looks the same as a normal Range Rover, yet anyone but a speed freak will be disappointed once they remove the wrapper.

The Range Rover Sport is not a full blooded off-roader like the normal Range Rover. But still, this member of the Range Rover stable is not a bad vehicle. Melted chocolate still tastes good, doesn't it?

At first glance

It's difficult to spot the differences between the Range Rover and the Range Rover Sport. It is only when you park them next to each other that you can see the small variations, like body lines and a few air vents.

Even the interior looks similar. There is no skimping when it comes to luxury and comfort. Like its Land Rover nieces and nephews, the Sport's interior is designed to make the rich and famous feel at home. There is more leather

than at a Harley-Davidson rally, but it's stylish, and comes with a button for every little thing, there's even one to open the glove compartment.

The SE model that we had to test is not even the most luxurious model. There are a few models which come with more gadgets. But the SE probably won't leave you feeling as if you're back in your varsity VW Beetle.

There is also much more space in the cabin than in a Beetle, and a family will be able to go on holiday in comfort.

But if you're going to start packing tents and camping gear in for the trip, the load bin might get a little tight.

The Range Rover Sport's gear lever distinguishes it from the normal Range Rover's dial. And it's also around the gear lever that you'll notice the biggest difference: Where the Range Rover has a button to engage the low range gearbox, there is only an empty piece of plastic in the Range Rover Sport. That means that this Range doesn't come with a low range gearbox.



Under the hood

This is where the big questions come in. The engine is a stag – a 3 litre V6 turbo diesel that produces 215 kW and 600 Nm, and there is no shortage of power. You can also argue that an eight speed automatic gearbox has a low enough gear ratio in the first few gears to compensate for the lack of low range. The eight gear Amarok also doesn't have a low range gearbox.

But the Sport still doesn't feel like a full blooded 4x4. Even though it has Land

Rover's CommandShift 2, which allows you to choose between different off-road driving modes.

Earlier this year a women's magazine in Europe selected the Range Rover Sport as the most desirable sports utility vehicle in the world. And maybe that's the target market. Maybe the Sport isn't aimed at the Johan Badenhorst's and André de Villiers' of the world. Maybe it wants to be a comfortable city 4x4 that mounts a sidewalk with ease. With air suspension that raises

the ground clearance from 213 mm to 278 mm, it wouldn't struggle to do so.

And if a storm drain somewhere in a leafy suburb floods, the wading depth of 850 mm will come in handy.

The full-time four wheel drive will definitely work well if the roads are wet and slippery, not to mention the gravel road leading to the stables where the kids take riding lessons.

Actually, the 4x4 genetics that are standard in anything with a Land Rover badge are not entirely lost on a city 4x4. And that, along with the adjustable air suspension, literally makes it stand out head and shoulders above its competitors.

How does it drive?

Even though this is the relatively tame turbo diesel V6, not the supercharged V8 that you find in the Range Rover Sport SVR, you feel like a race driver when you step on the gas. The power delivery is instant and the gear changes are so smooth you won't even spill your latté.

If the road gets a bit rough and uneven, the 20-inch low profile tyres can be a little hard on your body, but the air suspension compensates for this somewhat.

On the open road the power is more than enough to comfortably reach your cruising speed and maintain it, but the absence of adjustable cruise control is something you have to take into account. The Sport does have normal cruise control and automatic speed limiting which helps keep the traffic officers at bay.

In a nutshell

The Range Rover Sport is a very good package for the city driver that wants to drive comfortably on dirt roads and even the sandy tracks of Mozambique or gravel roads of northern KZN. In this instance the adjustable air suspension counts in your favour, but only

KEY FIGURES

Engine: 2993 cc V6 turbo-diesel
Power: 215 kW @ 4000 r/min
Torque: 600 Nm @ 1500 - 1750 r/min
Top speed: 210 km/h
0-100 km/h: 7,2 s
Transmission: 8-speed automatic gearbox, full-time four wheel drive and electronic traction control.
Suspension: Electric independent air suspension front and rear.
Tyres: 255/55R20
Fuel tank: 80 litre
Fuel consumption: 7,9 litre/100 km (combined cycle)
Ground clearance: 213 mm - 278 mm (with air suspension)
Approach angle: 19,4° - 27,2° (with air suspension)
Departure angle: 24,9° - 31° (with air suspension)
Wading depth: 850 mm
Weight: 2115 kg
Towing capacity: 3500 kg (braked)
Warranty: 3 year/100 000 km
Service plan: 5 year/100 000 km
Price: R1 170 231

up to about 40 km/h.

If you want to compare fast apples with fast apples, the Range Rover Sport doesn't do too badly. With regards to off-road ability, the air suspension makes it much better than the Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.0 CRD Overland, the BMW xDrive 30d and the Audi Q7 3.0 TDi Quattro, but the Jeep has a low-range gearbox which counts in its favour. The Range Rover, at R1 170 231 is also about R200 000 more expensive than the rest, but it gets quite a lot more power out of its 3 litre turbo diesel engine.

With regards to gadgets and luxury, all four are on par, so you get more power and more height for more money. And the Range Rover Sport is definitely worth the money. 🚗



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Swedish swagger

The **VOLVO XC90 IS HERE**. Gerrie van Eeden was at the launch to see how much class and technology the Swedes could fit into their latest SUV.

The Swedes at Volvo's head office were not the only ones that were excited about the arrival of the XC90. The first 1 927 models that were offered online at the end of last year, sold out within 47 hours. In fact, most of them sold out in the first hour.

The new Volvo XC90 has nearly as much technology as NASA's computer lab. Part of this technology involves producing a lot of power from small engines, allowing you to traverse tar and gravel roads quickly and safely.

At first glance

Volvo didn't go nuts with the new design. The XC90 looks different from

its predecessor, but it is clearly a Volvo, with those curved brake lights that follow the body and the diagonal line across the grille.

It is still a large vehicle, but not overwhelmingly so when you are behind the steering wheel. Each button has its place in the wood-finished dashboard and centre console, and nothing is hidden away behind something else. Once you've found the start button you won't need to look for it again.

The leather seats and trim are available in white or black and the buttons are not cast from plastic. The buttons and knobs have diamond detail which Robin Page, director of Volvo's interior design, calls "The

jewels of the interior."

From the touch screen you can control the sound system, access the digital owner's manual or adjust the climate – in four different zones. That is standard equipment all round.

Optional extras include things like a 360° camera, adaptable cruise control and a panoramic sunroof.

There are three specification levels, the Inscription, Momentum and R-Design, which basically have to do with differences in trim. Then you can also choose from two different packages, Premium or Techno, to add a pre-determined list of extras. Obviously Premium is the more luxurious option and Techno is more focussed on the technological extras.

VOLVO XC90

SPACE FOR MORE.

The extra seats in the rear are not optional, but they fold away nicely enough so that your space is not compromised.

TECHNOLOGY FOR AFRICA...

IntelliSafe technology's purpose is to keep the driver, passengers and pedestrians safe.

LIFT HIM UP. The air suspension can be set higher for rough terrain, but it drops again if you drive faster than 40km/h.

ADAPTABLE. The platform of the XC90 was developed to be adapted for use in any Volvo model. Thus the same technology will be available across all Volvos.





Under the hood

The XC90 is the first vehicle that was built entirely by Volvo without borrowing components from elsewhere. It uses Volvo's Scalable Product Architecture (SPA). The SPA platform is designed to be used for all Volvo models in future, with only minor adjustments. The manufacturer will be able to

build an entirely new chassis and model in the same factory without changing the entire assembly line.

For the XC90 there are four different, two-litre, four-cylinder engines, two being turbo-petrols and two turbo-diesels. There will be a hybrid coming to South Africa, which combines a petrol engine with an electric motor.

The petrol engines are named the T5 and the T6, with the T6 having a supercharger in addition to a turbo-charger. The T5 develops 187 kW and 350 Nm and the T6 develops 235 kW and 400 Nm. This from a two-litre petrol engine. I suspect in Germany someone is choking on bratwurst.

To rub in the salt even

more, the diesel D4 develops 140 kW and 400 Nm, while the D5 develops 165 kW and 470 Nm. The D5 does this with twin turbos, while the D4 has a single turbo.

All the engines are linked to an eight-speed automatic gearbox with full-time four wheel drive in the D5, T5 and T6. The D5 is the only model that is front-wheel drive only.

PHOTOS: PROVIDED



HOLD TIGHT. The interior can contend with any German competitor and the touch screen controls are as big as a tablet. Thus people with hands larger than a doll's won't struggle to use it.

NOT SO STINGY. The two diesel and two petrol engines are all two-litre, four-cylinder units. But power delivery is healthy, with good fuel consumption.

All the models that will come to South Africa will come standard with Volvo's comfort suspension. This consists of double wishbones in front and independent suspension at the rear, with a transverse leaf spring between the two rear wheels. This replaces traditional coil springs and helps to keep the vehicle stable. An optional extra is the adjustable air suspension, which can raise the vehicle to take on rough terrain. It

will also automatically keep the vehicle stable on uneven terrain and in tight corners.

Then you have the option to select different driving modes, which allows you to adjust the handling, acceleration and air suspension according to the terrain you are driving on.

Safety

With IntelliSafe technology in the XC90, traffic and pedestrians around the car are constantly monitored

by radar. And without you needing to do anything, the vehicle will automatically apply the brakes if you turn in front of oncoming traffic.

Part of the package is the ability to automatically follow the vehicle in front of you in slow moving traffic. If you unexpectedly leave your lane, it also feels as if a computer hand is softly turning the steering wheel back.

In a nutshell

The Volvo enters a market

that is dominated by German manufacturers. Think about the Audi Q7, the BMW X5 and the Volkswagen Touareg. Though the Volvo competes with them with regards to pricing, this small engine runs with the big dogs' three litre and V6 engines. It doesn't shy away, getting enough power out of its two-litre petrol and diesel engines. It gives them hell with regards to fuel consumption. The only question is, what colour should yours be? 🚗

PRICES

XC90 D4	Geartronic FWD Momentum - R804 000	XC90 T5	Geartronic AWD R-Design - R888 700
XC90 T5	Geartronic AWD Momentum - R827 400	XC90 D5	Geartronic AWD Inscription - R893 900
XC90 D4	Geartronic FWD Inscription - R844 600	XC90 T6	Geartronic AWD Inscription - R907 600
XC90 D5	Geartronic AWD Momentum - R853 200	XC90 D5	Geartronic AWD R-Design - R914 600
XC90 T6	Geartronic AWD Momentum - R867 000	XC90 T6	Geartronic AWD R-Design - R928 300
XC90 T5	Geartronic AWD Inscription - R868 000		



AN OLD GENTLEMAN



Hanlo Fouché 2001 Toyota Hilux 2.7i double cab

This 22-year-old fire-fighter calls his Hilux "Gentleman," but he should be calling this old guy "Grandpa".

On the odometer?

277 000 km.

How many of those were off road?

I'd say about 15%.

How many owners has it had?

I'm the third.

How much did it cost?

R92 000 in 2014. It had about 252 000 km on the clock when I bought it.

Why this Toyota bakkie?

It's one of the most reliable Toyotas, a real die-hard.

Does it have a nickname?

"Gentleman", but the driver has yet to start acting like one!

Where have you taken it?

Cederberg, Bontebok National Park, the West Coast and the Karoo National Park.

Your dream destination?

I'd love to tour Botswana in it.

Any breakdowns?

None.

And repairs?

I had to replace the universal joint and the brakes.

Any modifications?

I had an aluminium canopy fitted onto the vehicle and I made a back bumper for it myself.

What do you like about it?

The reliability.

And what don't you like?

Second-hand parts are hard to come by.

What do you take on a long trip?

I always take a headlamp, my camera, my girlfriend (she always brings food) and a few pairs of undies!

With R10 000...

I'd like to show the Gentleman the beauty of the Kgalagadi veld. 📷

If you have a 4x4 that has more than 250 000 km on the clock, tell us about it. Send your story to editor@driveout.co.za and include a photo of the vehicle and a head-and-shoulders photo of yourself.



Do you own a Toyota Fortuner?

DON'T FORGET to send us your Fortuner Stories, see p 12.





FORTUNER

#TellBetterStories

Her name is

FREEDOM

COERT SMIT FROM REITZ didn't have the best beginning when he bought his Fortuner, but after that, it was pure pleasure. This is his story.



TOYOTA

LEAD THE WAY



TOUGH CUSTOMER (previous page). The Smits go through the deep waters of the Kunene River.

NO WORRIES (left and far left). The Fortuner was tough enough to tackle a jeep track near Lusaka, and got Coert and Magdel Smit safely to Red Drum in Kaokoland

Africa, here we come!

I made a few modifications to her, because I wanted to tour far and wide with the vehicle. First on my list was a good bull bar with a strong winch. The suspension also had to be adjusted in order to gain a bit more ground clearance. An extra spare wheel was next, followed by a solid roof rack. I put in a rear airbag to help raise the back of the vehicle if the load gets too heavy and I put in an extra 40l fuel tank. Finally, we were ready to tackle Africa.

When we travel, we remove the back seats so that we have enough space for two fridges, a good drawer system with six drawers and an extra load behind the front seats. We prefer to sleep in a dome tent rather than a rooftop tent.

Our first trip was to Zambia because that is where our children live. What an experience! We were in that country for about two months and covered nearly 11 000 km in Zambia alone, most of the time it was just myself and my wife. We visited North and South Luangwa, the Kapisha warm springs, Kasanka (with the bat migration), Shobill at Bangweulu Lake, Chimfunshi's chimpanzees and the source of the Zambezi River. We were privileged to stand astride the Zambezi and taste it's waters.

The wildlife that we saw in Kafue and Busanga was beautiful, but the tsetse flies were not! The Liuwa Plains have their own unique charm – and we saw large numbers of wildebeest. We also saw “Lady Liuwa” of the documentary movie *The Last Lioness*, as well as the two males that were introduced to the park to keep her company, from a distance of just five meters.

The Sioma Waterfall, Victoria Waterfall, the Blue Lagoon, Lochinvar, Iteshi-Teshi ... we experienced all of it in our Fortuner. We camped at Kiambi, alongside the Zambezi, and from there we followed a jeep track from the banks of Lake Kariba to the far side of Victoria Falls. It was two days of difficult, but wonderful, 4x4 driving.



I am the proud owner of a white 2010 model Fortuner 3.0 D4-D. I've been behind her steering wheel for five and a half years and I am still thrilled with her. I bought my Fortuner, brand new, in Bethlehem. She was serviced and registered in my name and then parked on the showroom floor, waiting for me to collect her on the Monday, as planned. But the Sunday before I was to fetch her, there was an accident at the intersection right in front of the showroom and a traffic light came flying through the window, landing on the engine of my brand new Fortuner. Yes, I am the man whose Fortuner was in an accident before I even drove a single kilometer with it. Luckily Toyota repaired the damages in a jiffy and I could take my Fortuner home with me.

To date we have travelled a happy 195 000 km of road with it, and it has been a pleasure! The Fortuner offers value for money, good fuel consumption, loads of comfort, great handling and excellent 4x4 capabilities. You can try to find something to beat this vehicle, but you'll be searching for a long time.

From the first moment I drove her, I knew that this was the vehicle for me. It is absolutely perfect for what I and my dearest intended to do with it.

Safely across the Death Acre

We were in Angola twice, once in 2013 and again in 2015. It was an unforgettable experience. We were at Lubango, drove the infamous Lebaq Pass and saw the Cristo Rei, or Christ statue (one of only three in the world). We followed in the footsteps of the Dorsland Trekkers and visited a variety of waterfalls, including the second biggest waterfall in Africa: the Kalandula Waterfall. We rode through the rainforests up to Uíge and back to Barra do Dande, Luanda, Benguela, Namibe and Tombua.

We went in search of the only river in the world that runs underneath a mountain, but it was hard work! You need to know your climbing stuff, both on the ascent and descent!

There is a reason that Death Acre has gotten such a name, but it is a unique adventure. If the wind is in your favour, you can catch wonderful kabeljou specimens at the mouth of the Kunene River. Kaokoland is also beautiful!


Closer to home

What a beautiful country Namibia is! It is a land of contrasts. We were privileged to drive from Lüderitz and Kolman-skop, past Sesriem to Sossusvlei and Solitaire, and from there we drove right through the Namib to Walvis Bay (about 800 km). The dunes still give me a thrill when I think about them. Etosha, Khaudum, Epupa Falls and Van Zyl's Pass, the Marienfluss and the Purros Cliff, where you can get seriously stuck in the drift sand if you're reckless, is indescribable. In Namibia you can drive in just about any direction – everything is beautiful.

Botswana is different. We enjoyed the Khama-Rhino sanctuary, the Elephant Sands with its hordes of elephants and the Chobe and Moremi reserves.

And don't think that we skipped our own country. We have been to Mpumalanga, West Coast, the Richtersveld, the Baviaanskloof and Gamkaskloof. Our Fortuner conquered it all. I called her "Vrystaat" because she's like Free State rugby: Just when you feel like giving up, she surprises you with her best.

We are hoping to do an epic tour in 2016: Four countries, three lakes and approximately 12 000 km. Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi. The trip will include Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria as well as the Serengeti. All in our Fortuner!

Go and explore the world! You won't regret it! 



Coert Smit and his wife Magdel live in Reitz in the eastern Free State. He farmed for 37 years, but retired in 2009. When he and Magdel aren't touring the world in their Fortuner, he enjoys doing lots of wood work.

SHIP GRAVEYARD (top). Vrystaat stands safely on the beach at Barra do Dande in Angola, where 57 ships have run aground.

LAND AND SAND (middle). On a lekker dune drive between Solitaire and Walvis Bay, Namibia.

BRAVE EXPLORERS (bottom). A drive through the Death Acre is a nerve-wrecking undertaking.

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SEEKING THE SNOW. To go chasing after snow in Lesotho is a question of being in the right place at the right time. But at places like the Matebeng Pass, your chances are good.



Searching for snow in *Lesotho*

During a visit to **LESOTHO IN WINTER**, Evan Naudé found out the chilly season turns it into a world of frozen waterfalls, rugged mountain passes and one or two locals who complained about the weather.

PHOTOS: EVAN NAUDE

T

he customs officer cranes his neck as he inspects the back of the Fortuner. “What is this?” he asks and points to my cooler box. “Just food stuff,” I say in the hope that he leaves my braai meat alone.

He looks around some more, but I can see it’s more out of a sense of duty than actual interest. “How’s the weather these days?” I ask jokingly, since it’s winter and I am wearing a t-shirt after sitting in the warm bakkie all day. And really, I just want to distract him from my beers in the corner of the boot.

He turns, rubs his shoulders and with a shiver, says: “Yoh! It’s very cold!”

I look up at the bright sun in a cloudless sky and wonder what it must feel like when it gets properly cold. Cold enough for snow, to be precise, because it’s exactly for those little white flakes that I’ve decided to come visit Lesotho in the winter time.

Snow seekers

From the Van Rooyen’s Hek border post I drive south towards Mafeteng. I am travelling with my dad, Stefan, who had the urge to swop the green farmlands of the Western Cape for the snow-covered peaks of the Mountain Kingdom. >

Well that was the plan, but the weather report for the coming week predicts clear skies. By the nature of it (excuse the pun), it is quite hard to chase snow in this part of the world, since you need to do your trip's planning before you know what the weather is going to be like, especially when you travel all the way from the Western Cape.

In any case, to travel here in heavy snow can be tough. A glistening white blanket of snow over the landscape is beautiful, but the novelty quickly wears off when you're forced to drive in a snow storm or slide around in the icy sludge that results the day after.

I stay optimistic, however, and hope that the dice rolls in my favour on our trip, since our route takes us ever northwards, towards the higher regions of the country. The closer we get to the mountainous parts, the better our chances of finding snow will be.

Just outside Mafeteng I turn north towards Motsekuoa. From here we take the gravel road to the east past Matelile and on to Malealea where we are staying for the night. On the peak of the Gates of Paradise Pass is a sign that says we're now 2001 m above sea level. This height isn't really unusual in Lesotho though, since more than 80 % of the country lies above the 1800 m mark.

It is however the first great view of our journey, a taste of the seemingly infinite mountain ranges that lie ahead. The landscape is much drier than when I first visited the country a few months ago. Just like South Africa's northern provinces, it rains in summer and the lush green scenery I drove through at the time is now shaded in the colours of winter: yellow, brown and orange. But



I see no white yet.

At Malealea Lodge we are welcomed by a staff member named Bob. I want to know where we can find snow. "No, not around here, but it is still very cold!" He shuts his eyes tightly and purses his lips. "Shooo!" he says, shivering dramatically.

He shows us our rondavel for the night and explains that there will only be electricity for four hours after sunset. We are having a braai anyway, but it is nonetheless something to keep in mind when you travel in Lesotho. We would later encounter the same thing at Semonkong Lodge and Sehlabathebe National Park.

That evening at the lodge's bar, a group of young Filipinos are playing pool. "We get a lot of foreigners here," says Ralitsa, the barman, as he hands me a Maluti beer. I compliment him on his good English, something that is rare in the countryside. "In the bigger towns where more tourists pass through, English is spoken more," he says.

Ralitsa is also freezing, he tells me, so

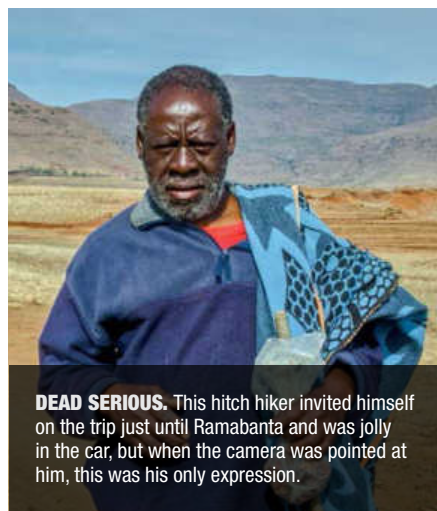
I ask what he would recommend as a night cap to numb the cold. He comes back with two Amarula's for me and Stefan. I guess some traditions stretch across borders.

Nutcrackers and waterfalls

The next morning we head north on the gravel road to Ramabanta. On a narrow part of the road I see two trucks approaching around a bend and slow down. By the side of the road an old man gestures wildly. I stop, because it looks like he sees something around the bend that I can't.

I wind down the window and he comes over to chat, but I can't understand a word of the Sotho he's speaking. "English?" I ask, but he just shakes his head and keeps talking.

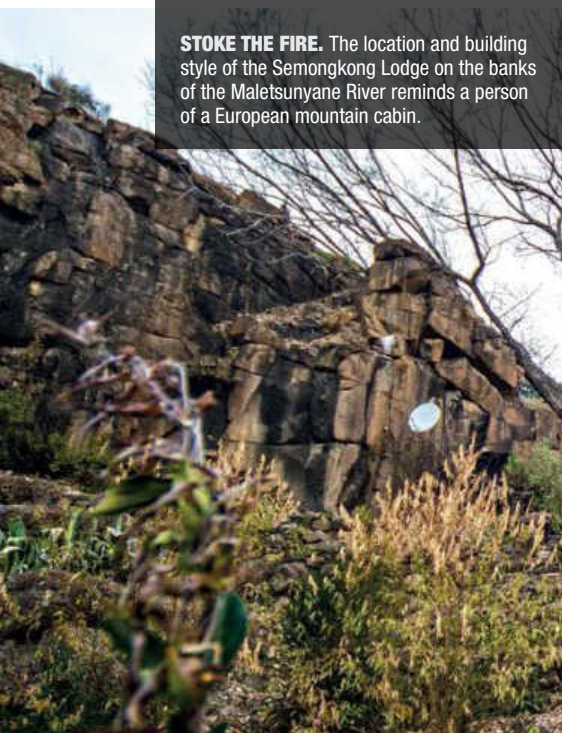
He is clutching a bag of nuts which he is chewing so vigorously with the two or three teeth left in his mouth that a barrage of crumbs and saliva fly into the open window. "Ramabanta," I say



DEAD SERIOUS. This hitch hiker invited himself on the trip just until Ramabanta and was jolly in the car, but when the camera was pointed at him, this was his only expression.



ICE CURTAIN. On the Matebeng Pass there are plenty of rivers that get stopped in their tracks by the winter cold.



STOKE THE FIRE. The location and building style of the Semonkong Lodge on the banks of the Maletsunyane River reminds a person of a European mountain cabin.

and indicate that's where we are headed. With two blunt index fingers he makes the shape of a T, and gestures to the right. "Ramabanta, yes," he says and I finally understand that he wants a lift to a T-junction down the road.

He sees that I understand and before I can say anything, he climbs in the back of the Fortuner. "Is he coming with us?" asks Stefan. "Looks like it!" I laugh. The old guy never stops talking, and through it all I keep hearing the crunching of nuts. "Alright *Oom*, just don't spit in the car so much," I joke in Afrikaans, but he just keeps on chattering.

By the time we drop him off the three of us have had a lekker conversation without understanding a word of each other's languages. I ask him for a photo before we continue, but every time I take aim with the camera the jolly chatterbox pulls a stony poker face. I tell him to smile, which he does, but every time I lift the camera he becomes expressionless again. I give up and wave goodbye. And then he flashes a wide smile again with his zebra crossing teeth-arrangement.

From Ramabanta we turn south onto the A5 tar road in the direction of Semonkong. A few kilometres down the road we find the first snow, but it's no more than a few blotches in the shade of the mountainside. Building a snow man would be a bit of a stretch, but if there is still snow here from a few days ago, there is definitely a chance for more on our

route. Just outside Semonkong, by the bridge over the Maletsunyane River, we turn right onto a gravel road.

This road leads to the western side of the Maletsunyane Ravine and eventually brings you to an incredible view over the famous Maletsunyane Waterfall. It is a must-see if you are travelling through the Mountain Kingdom.

Semonkong Lodge is situated in the ravine, in a shallower part, north of the waterfall. The stone walls and the foot paths with lanterns between the rondavels above the river remind me of a European mountain resort. It gets almost as cold here when the sun sets, but the flickering flames in the fireplace lit by the staff help to fight the freeze.

Deep in the mountains

I heard about new lodging at the beautifully unspoiled Sehlabathebe National Park in the south-eastern corner of the country, but couldn't find much information about it online.

On maps like Tracks4Africa, the gravel road leading to the park also looked like it wasn't in use much. Therefore I wasn't sure whether we should tackle this piece of road. From Semonkong it is only 190 km, but in Lesotho, with its winding mountain passes, a short distance often takes much longer to cover than you might think. In the end I decide to take a chance, and what a lovely pay-off it turned out to be. >

From Semonkong we head south on the A5 to Seforong and from there south-east on the A4 to Quacha's Neck. Just before Seforong the road meets the Orange River and runs along it for a good 50 km. Imagine views over deep ravines that a river has carved into the earth over thousands of years – that's what you find here. It's not as deep as the Maletsunyane Ravine, but the difference is that the road runs right next to this chasm. And it's a lovely road, that seems to be kept in a good condition.

On the other side of the Ramatselislo border post, the world around us becomes desolate – it's the only part of our whole journey where we don't see any signs of civilization, apart from a lone-some shepherd here and there.

I was unsure about the condition of the road from Ramatselislo to Sehlabathebe, but I quickly realise I don't have to worry about a thing. A very neat gravel road runs along the border, with Lesotho on the left side of the road and KwaZulu Natal on the right. The closer we get to Sehlabathebe, the more mountainous the landscape becomes and before long we are driving with cliffs on

“And then he flashes a wide smile again with his zebra crossing teeth-arrangement.”

either side of us.

At Sehlabathebe we meet Tsepo, who looks surprised at us arriving at the park at this time of day – with no booking. “Yes, we have space. One or two rooms?” he asks. It's the same price and when he shows us the rooms, we realise why he is so accommodating: We are the only two people in the whole place.

It is still early afternoon so we decide to explore the park. Tsepo shows us a gravel road that leads to the old lodge and from there we follow a foot path to the incredible rock formations that are characteristic of the park.

If you like hiking, this is a great place to spend a day or two and experience the Drakensberg Mountains in all their glory. We sit down on a hill to take in the epic landscape. Far below us I see two people on horses trotting by.

When they come within earshot, one

of them calls to us. I don't understand what he says, but from his gestures I can see he is asking for matches. I have a lighter so we walk down to them.

When I get closer, I see it's a man and his son. The boy is wrapped in a blanket, the distinctive feature of a shepherd in these parts, but the man is dressed in new shoes and a thick winter jacket.

We stay with them for a moment while the man rolls a newspaper cigarette and I find the moment delightfully improbable. Two pairs of fathers and sons from different worlds, crossing paths in the middle of nowhere and both pairs on a journey. Who they are, where they came from and where they're going we will never know.

The next day's drive is the most beautiful stretch of road on our whole journey through Lesotho. If you have already

THOSE DAM CURVES. The gravel road on the western side of the Katse Dam gives you a different perspective of this body of water, but the road is rough in places and full of twists.

PHOTOS: STEFAN NAUDE



LIGHT STROLL. The rock formations on the otherwise open plains of the Sehlabathebe National Park are something special.



FIRE FOR TWIGS. This man and his son travelled over the plains of the Sehlabathebe National Park. With hand signals he asked for matches to light his cigarette.

crossed Sani Pass off your bucket list and are wondering whether there are similar passes hiding elsewhere in Lesotho, head for the Matebeng Pass. It is unspoilt and stunning, and the view from the summit is just as incredible as Sani.

We also find a good deal of snow on the pass, even though it is only the remains of snowfall from a few days ago. It is definitely the cold up here that preserves the snow, since we also find at least a dozen frozen waterfalls. Against the otherwise brown landscape, these prominent, glimmering, white ice formations are quite a sight.

From the other side of the pass the gravel road runs northwards past Sehonghong, and for a few kilometres we again drive at the foot of high cliffs on the banks of the Orange River. The horizon has already started pulling the sun under by the time we drive through Thaba-Tseka, but there are still more passes between us and Katse.

Again I am reminded that relatively short distances, like the 182 km we >



drove from Sehlabathebe and Katse, can easily take all day to drive. During winter in Lesotho it also starts getting dark around six o'clock, which is exactly the case when we arrive at Katse Lodge.

Katse's curves

During my previous visit to Lesotho I stayed in one of the self catering units at Katse Lodge, but this time I booked a room inside the lodge. At R550 for a twin room, it was the most expensive accommodation on our trip. The staff, food and service were excellent, but the room itself was a disappointment.

At this price (and a bar that sells a can of beer for R25) one expects a room that doesn't feel like a dormitory, even if the lodge was converted from the workers quarters when the dam was completed.

Still, you shouldn't have to repair a

showerhead with insulation tape before being able to have a wash after a long day on the road.

The next day we're already on the road by sunrise. Tonight we are sleeping in South Africa again, but there is still a whole day's driving ahead of us to the Caledonspoort border and on to Lesoba Guest Farm, our last destination just outside Fouriesburg. The A25 tar road runs on the eastern side of the Katse Dam to the Malibamatso Bridge, but it looks like way too much tar to me.

Instead, I aim for a gravel road that runs along the western side of the dam and this turns out to be the definition of "winding". It follows the contours of the dam and zig-zags around the seemingly never-ending creases in the landscape.

On what felt like the hundredth left turn, into a hairpin bend to the right and



“Here the road is nothing more than a jeep track that curves around large boulders.”

over a drift where water seeps down to the dam, Stefan remarks drily: “Haven’t we been here before?”

Even though there are many similar turns in the road and the rondavels of the locals are all built at the same angle, this road is all but boring. There are people, animals and taxis everywhere and a lot of “Lesotho handbrakes” – rocks the size of rugby balls in the road, which at one time were packed behind a vehicle’s wheels to keep it from rolling.

Here and there the road is nothing more than a jeep track that curves around large boulders. This bit of road is the most rugged of our whole journey. And when it rains, you’ll definitely slide around quite a bit or perhaps not even be able to drive there at all as a result of rock or mud slides.

A back road, a ski slope and a singer

At the Malibatso Bridge the gravel road joins the A25 tar road and runs past the dam’s intake tower to Ha Lejone. North of the town we drive for 17 km to a low bridge over the Malibatso River.

This road is the so-called Kao mine road that runs eastward past the mine and on to the A1. During my last visit to Lesotho, we had planned to drive this road from the A1 to Ha Lejone, but it rained so badly that we couldn’t risk

driving the road only to reach this bridge and not be able to cross when the Malibatso is in flood.

Now that I see it, I understand why. At its highest point it is barely 3 m above the riverbed and even in the dry season the water level is only about a meter below the bridge. Be sure to find out about the river’s flow before driving this road, especially in a south-westerly direction.

The rest of the road, however, is beautiful. The mining companies keep it in a good condition and north of the mines we find more and more snow as the road climbs higher. On the last few kilometres before the A1 junction we find the most snow of the whole trip and we are surrounded by white mountains.

Where the Kao mine road meets the A1 at the top of the Tlaeng Pass, we turn north in the direction of Butha-Butha. From here it is all tar to the Caledonspoort border post.

Just after lunch I see a sign for Afriski and decide to pop in. It is ski season after all and I am curious to see what one of the few African ski resorts looks like. From a distance, I can already see the wide white ski slopes on an otherwise brown mountain and tiny specs zig-zagging their way to the bottom.

In and around the bar at the foot of the ski slopes it’s a hive of activity. The >

FROZEN WORLD. The closer you get to the higher parts of Lesotho, the more snow you find. On the Matebeng Pass you also get a beautiful view along with your snowman cement.

HIGHWAY TO THE TOP. (bottom left) The ski lift at the Afriski ski resort takes you to the top of the 1 km-long ski slope. From there it’s up to you to glide your way down to the bottom.

MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS. The Maletsunyane Ravine outside Semonkong carves a deep lesion through the landscape. This view is on the A5 south of the town.

people look like they have teleported straight from a European or Canadian ski resort: Snowboarders walk around in baggy clothing, fat beanies and big goggles, couples drink cappuccinos with their skis resting against the table and a group of youngsters in oversized helmets follow a ski instructor to the ski school.

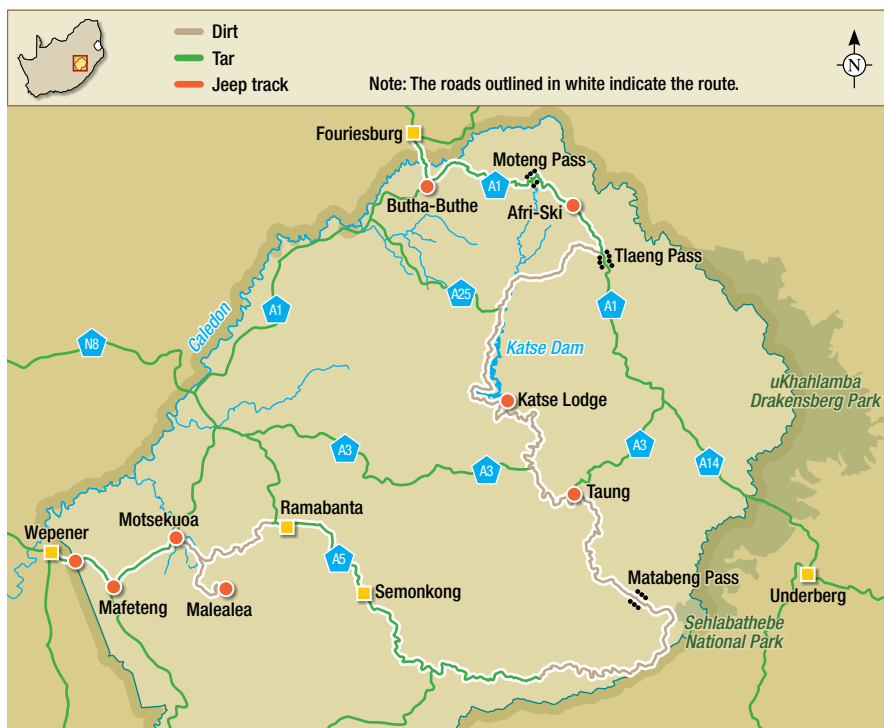
On the biggest slope there is a constant flow of people who take the ski lift to the top and then come speeding down, but not necessarily always on their skis. It seems this skiing business is harder than it looks.

We meet the paralysed Afrikaans singer Mathys Roets at the foot of the slopes. He tells us he is on holiday. "I'm just about to get on the sit ski and show these guys how it's done!" he jokes before leaving. We have a beer in the Gondola Café, which is actually the highest pub in Africa (sorry Sani Lodge!) and from there I see Mathys as he glides effortlessly down the slope on a specially-made ski chair.

A Lesotho souvenir

From Afriski we take the A1 over the Mahlasela Pass and then the Moteng Pass to Butha-Buthe. From here it's 10 km north to the Caledonspoort border post and a lesson in Lesotho bargaining for Stefan.

As we wait to get our passports stamped at the border, two women approach us with arms full of Lesotho hats.



I immediately decline, but Stefan asks the price. "Eight," says the woman in broken English. "Eight?" Stefan replies in disbelief. She repeats herself and he asks: "Oh, eighteen?" She nods her head profusely and says "Eighteen, yes" – she can smell a sale coming.

My dad hands her a R20 note, which she takes in her left hand, but the right hand stays extended. "Eighty! Eighty!"

she says. "No way, you said eighteen!" he protests, but he already has the hat in his hand and that means the transaction is final. "Eighty!" the woman repeats. He gives her the rest of the money and we walk back to the car. I can barely contain my laughter as we climb in the Fortuner. He throws the hat on the back seat with disdain and a bit more vigour than necessary. 📸

I WANT TO GO TOO!



WHAT DID YOU DRIVE? A Toyota Fortuner 3.0 D4-D 4x4.

HOW WERE THE ROADS? For the most part I did not need 4x4, but the parts between Sehlabathebe and Katse, and also around Katse Dam, require it. In the wet it is definitely essential, as is low range.

WHERE CAN I FILL UP? Fill up as close to the border as possible as proper fuel stations are rare in Lesotho. There are however fuel stations in Semonkong, Thaba-Tseka and Butha-Buthe.

WHERE CAN I BUY FOOD? We bought all our food in South Africa and didn't have an issue bringing it across the border. In bigger towns you will find small grocery shops and there is also food available at lodges. Be sure to inform the staff ahead of time if you want to eat there so they can make sure they have stock.

WHERE DID YOU STAY? At Malealea Lodge it costs between R200 and R500 per person per night, depending on the type of accommoda-

tion: rondavel, hut or farm house. To camp is R100 per person. Meals are available here and there is a bar. Contact ☎ 082 552 4215, ✉ info@malealealodge.com or 🌐 www.malealea.com.

At Semonkong Lodge it is between R365 and R510 per person per night, self-catering. Camping is R90 per person. There is also a restaurant and a bar here. Contact ☎ +26 62 700 6037, ✉ bookings@placeofsmoke.co.ls or 🌐 www.placeofsmoke.co.ls.

A self-catering unit in the Sehlabathebe National Park is R400 per person. You also pay a conservation fee of R30 per person. For bookings, go to 🌐 www.safarinow.com/destinations/sehlabathebe-national-park.

Accommodation at Katse Lodge is R823 per night for a single person and R549 for two sharing. Self-catering units are R829 per night for two and R1209 for three people. Contact ☎ 011 718 5159 or ✉ res@katselodge.co.za.



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DUST TO DUST. If you participate in the Koës Pan Rally, you'd best wear driving glasses and pull a pair of your wife's stockings over your face, because you'll eat dust here.



PHOTOS: GERRIE VAN EEDEN
AND JEREMI JANSE VAN RENSBURG

DUST is a must IN KOËS

The **KOËS PAN RALLY** (pronounced “Khois”) in southern Namibia is a dusty affair that involves racing and chewing the fat. Gerrie van Eeden was there.

A blueish Uri comes ambling over a dune in a small cloud of dust. Johan de Villiers is standing next to me on the back of his red Hilux looking at them. “This guy has a young lady with him,” he says. “They probably stopped behind the dunes to look at the flowers.”

The rest of the vehicles that are taking part on the first day of the Koës Pan Rally have long since passed Johan’s checkpoint. On today’s 38km long circular route, the chances are good that even this blue Uri will lap. Kiewiet de Villiers, Johan’s dad, calls out to the Uri driver as they come closer. “Are you herding sheep?”

“No,” comes the answer. “Then why are you driving your vehicle so slowly?”

The Koës Pan Rally is all about speed. And when speed is left out of the equation, it is about endurance. Even if your vehicle is not the fastest on the route, chances are that you will place if it can just stay in one piece till the end of the rally.

Warm jackets and swimming trunks

My bosom-buddy, Jeremi Janse van Rensburg and I left the Cape long before sunrise in an Amarok, with Thys and Elismari de Jager following us in a Hilux. Elismari’s family is from Koës, on the other hand, Jeremi has no idea where this small Namibian town is.

"I didn't know what to expect, so I packed in a warm jacket and swimming trunks," he says.

At least I know that Koës is somewhere near Keetmanshoop in southern Namibia. But like many small towns in this wide open country, you shouldn't swerve for a chicken in the road; you'll miss the town completely.

From Keetmanshoop we follow a gravel road north east and eventually arrive in Koës just before five in the afternoon. There is only one tar road, and it runs right past the filling station.

This is farming country. The co-op is right beside the filling station and next door is a workshop with two guys working on a Uri. Eugene Vermeulen, one of the organisers of the rally and co-owner of the filling station gets into his Uri (also a light blue one) and shows us where to camp for the weekend.

On the way here, I tried to explain to Jeremi what a Uri is. But it was only when Eugene got into his that the penny finally dropped. This strange vehicle is an angular pipe-car crossed with a bakkie that is built by a variety of engine and chassis combinations.

They were initially built by Ewert Smith, on the chassis and engine of whatever was available in the scrapyard. Most have Toyota engines and chassis' that probably started out life in minibus taxis. Very few have four wheel drive and they are built without luxuries like air conditioning. To be honest, a speedometer and anything more than a temperature gauge is a luxury in a Uri. You glance down the fuel tank filler pipe to determine the fuel level. Uri's are made for farm work, and most of Ewert's are serving on Namibian farms.

Tonight we are braaing at Andries "Blou" Blaauw, a cousin that Thys told us about earlier. There are hunters here as well, who have just finished their trip. Fortunately for us, they want to hit the road early tomorrow morning so everybody is taking it easy. Tinus Cloete, who will also take part in the rally tomorrow, joins us around the fire.

The guys talk about the vehicles of the other competitors – extremely impressive engines like Lexus V8's and Yamaha R1's with exotic diff locks. "One guy has a Jaguar diff in his car," we hear.

I also learn a bit more about the amateur side of this event, because nobody has a sponsor and they all build their vehicles themselves.

MAIN PAVILION. The dunes around the pan make good pavilions during the rally where spectators can sit high and watch the men tackle the quarter mile races.



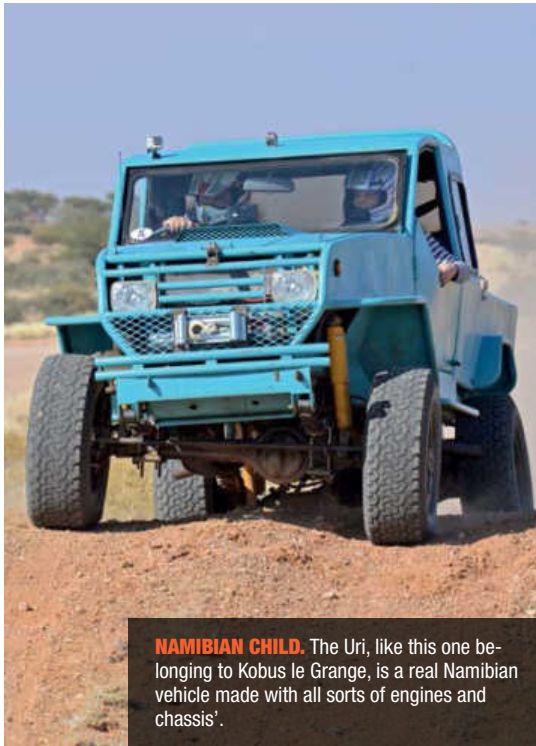
Tinus doesn't say much about his own vehicle. He only hopes that it stays in one piece until the end of the rally. I am not a very conservative driver, but when people start talking about driving cars to breaking point, I get a little nervous.

The noisy plain

The roosters take a holiday on rally weekend, because it's the engines that wake you up before sunrise. In the early

morning everybody start their engines, and they're not just left to idle. Because Koës is only as big as a postage stamp and surrounded by dunes, you can hear every roaring engine.

To tell you the truth, it didn't really stop during the night either. Motorcycles, bakkies and cars were racing until way after sundown to loosen them up for the rally. We would later hear the story of a driver that had to be taken into



NAMIBIAN CHILD. The Uri, like this one belonging to Kobus le Grange, is a real Namibian vehicle made with all sorts of engines and chassis'.



SAND EATERS (left). These strange vehicles are called Sandmasters. Pipe cars like this are light and made for dune driving.

GO BOYS! (below). Kiewiet de Villiers, the original organiser, encourages participants.



The starting point is right in front of the largest dune in the area which stands guard over the pan.

Keetmanshoop after dark because he fell off his motorbike.

A few vehicles found out the hard way that there is a fence on the pan and a Cruiser had an unfortunate, close-up meeting with a donkey. Johan says it's all part of it. As long as they don't get hurt while taking part, he is happy, says his brother, Hendrik, one of the organisers.

We are ready for the first day's event – the long distance rally. Ten vehicles are lined up to take part today. Tomorrow there will be more for the shorter, quarter mile drag race.

The starting point is right in front of the largest dune in the area which stands guard over the pan. The dune also serves as a pavilion for the spectators. Over time it develops a life of its own, with the crowd's reaction telling you what happened if you can't see it for yourself.

From here, the vehicles head out onto the dunes east of the pan. Then they turn onto a piece of stony ground with hard rocks and race over the dunes again, heading back to the pan. A lap is just a bit more than 38km and each vehicle needs to complete three laps.

The vehicles are divided into three different classes. First are the Sandmasters – pipe cars that have been built with great love over a long time. This includes one seater and two seater models, with noisy four-cylinder engines. They don't weigh much more than the few pipes and the engine used to make them. These cars are specifically designed to dance lightly over the dunes.

There are also a few pipe cars with larger engines and four-wheel drive. They're designed for the flat parts of the trails around the pan, and the crossing of dunes. On the rougher terrain, where the larger vehicles have more of an advan-

tage, the pipe cars need to be more careful if they want to make it to the finish line in one piece.

There are six taking part. Above the noise of the engines, I'm still trying to figure out which one has the Jaguar diff and how much power each engine generates when they set off.

In true rally style, vehicles start 30 seconds after one another. There is also a rule that if a driver wants to overtake, they are only allowed to do so on the right. For safety, see?

After the pipe cars have left, roaring with noise, an Isuzu double cab and a Tata set off. The Isuzu has apparently not been serviced for more than 80 000 km and the Tata (a single cab) has anything but a Tata engine under the hood.

With wheels spinning on the rocky pan, they set off, but that is the last we see of them, because neither complete the first lap. Later, speculation about broken diffs, side shafts that twisted or engines with terminal injuries is rife. But the true reason for their ultimate failure is never mentioned.

Lastly, two Uris line up. The two that are taking part have not been built by Evert, but by Frikkie Engels. His Uri has a spiffy camouflage design and a shiny Land Cruiser badge on the side. The bluish one belongs to Kobus le Grange.

Both have a sturdy 4x4 chassis and a gearbox with solid axles. Frikkie's runs on a 4.5 EFI Land Cruiser engine and Kobus' has a Lexus V8.

The Uris only compete against each other, and as Kobus is busy stopping to look at the flowers or herding sheep, Frikkie wins easily.

Among the pipe cars the competition is a bit stiffer. Of the six that started, only three finish; the others broke along the way. Tinus Cloete, who kept mum about his wheels around the fire last night, crosses the finish line first. This, after he started in third place, and his clutch broke half way through the final lap.

PW Karsten finishes second and Danie Retief comes in third. He also got a ten minute penalty for driving on the open road and not the specified jeep track. "It is an advantage not to drive on the jeep track, that way you can push on a bit faster," Johan explains.

After the cars finish, the motorcycles and quads set off. There are many more of them taking part in the 250 cc, 500 cc and quad classes. There is also a single rider in the Adventure class with a big



WHERE TO NOW? Danie Retief stops at Johan de Villiers' check point. If you miss a check point, you get disqualified.

KTM motorcycle. After one lap his shoulders are drooping and you can see that he is not happy with the toll that the race is taking on his body. But eventually he also manages to finish.

Snuffed out

As with any gathering where a bunch of people who like vehicles get together, the socialising happens outside around the fire at night, with a few cold beverages added to the mix of course.

This year was the first time that tour group, I Dream Africa, was part of the reception team. Along with the tented town that they set up on the pan, there is also a large tent where the prize giving will take place.

But you haven't been to Koës if you've not – for lack of a better word – smacked snuff into your nose. In the local hotel, Ben Lubbe is running around behind the bar serving everyone. The beer and Jägermeister flow like a river through

this dusty town, and on top of one of the fridges I see a special "snuff machine."

The machine is just an aluminium bar with two indents, which is fixed on a plank, almost like a seesaw. First, snuff is put into the indents on the one side of the seesaw. Then you put your nose on a hook over the bar. Somebody then hits the other side with a wooden mallet so that the snuff is literally shot into the back of your nose. This clears it up so well that you can almost smell what year

SPECTATOR SPORT. People come from far and wide to attend the Koës Rally, like these motorcyclists that came all the way from Cape Town.



your beer was bottled.

The camp fire outside the bar is where the socialising takes place. There is a group of motorcyclists that came here all the way from the Cape to join the party. When I ask them why they didn't take part in today's rally, they say that their bikes are way too heavy for that route. They're just here for the fun. "The racing we leave to the off-road bikes."

Family business

"My brother and cousin started driving rallies at the age of 9 or 10," Johan de Villiers tells me. "My dad started organising the rally, and now my one brother and sister-in-law are at the helm."

This explains why Johan was standing on his bakkie acting as an official. This very same brother's vehicle is one of those that didn't manage to finish yesterday's rally. But luckily today, with the shorter obstacle course, the quarter mile and the dune charge, there are a few more guys taking part who want to show what they are made of.

First up is the short obstacle course. It is a bit longer than a kilometre, but it winds between and over dunes and around sharp bends for four laps before a winner is crowned.

At the finish, Annemarie de Villiers is holding a chequered flag to show the winner that he has completed four laps. "Every year I say that we won't work again this year. But when I open my eyes again, here we are," she tells me between laps. She and her husband, Fourie, came all the way from Rundu in northern Namibia to be here.

First to tackle the obstacle course today are the motorcycles and quad bikes. There are fewer of them than yesterday



FAT CAT. Tinus Cloete didn't say much about his winning pipe car. He later revealed that it cost R250 000 to build and the shock absorbers were imported from America.

and they set off at the same time. The most action happens as they enter the first corner, shoulder to shoulder and at speed. From there they spread out and finish without any drama.

At last the obstacle course is completed and the main events start. On the pan, 400 m is marked off with nothing less than 16 lanes next to each other. They don't mess about with heats here.

Once again, the motorbikes get their chance first. From 250 cc up they flex their muscles, and Eugene and Rickus Vermeulen, two brothers who are part of the organising committee, eventually get some of the visiting adventure bikers to also take part.

Finally it is the cars' turn. The competition is once again split up into two classes – the four cylinders will face off with each other and then the six to eight cylinders will have a go. There are two

Hiluxes, two Navaras and an Isuzu with four cylinder engines that kick up some sand on the pan as they approach.

The Hiluxes leave the others literally eating their dust, but I suspect a performance chip or two is helping them along. I remember an internet video where an Amarok gave all of these bakkies a run for their money, and I wonder if I shouldn't have entered ours.

Then a short wheel base Toyota Prado with a noisy engine starts moving towards the start line. That engine is definitely not its own. "It is a Toyota Supra engine with two turbos", someone tells me. "Apparently it produces 400 kW!" The driver, Corné Willemse, isn't afraid to let the engine roar, and he is also no stranger to a limiter.

Fourteen vehicles gather at the starting line, loosening up. Alongside the Prado there is a Volkswagen Touareg, a couple of Land Cruisers, a Discovery 1 with a



V8 engine, a brand new Range Rover Sport, a few other double cab bakkies with big petrol engines and the Tata without the Tata-engine.

I am convinced the Range Rover will leave them all choking in its dust, but as I listen to the Prado driver winding up his engine, I wonder if I'll have to bite my tongue on this one.

But the Prado's bark is worse than its bite, and the noisiness doesn't even give it a podium finish. The Range Rover wins the 400m race by at least 50m. The Touareg and a Land Cruiser fight it out for second and third place.

Dunes for breakfast

The last event of the Koës Pan Rally is the dune charge. The same large dune is used every year. The cars set off one after the other from a certain point, once again divided into their different classes. The start is moved closer to the dune every time and as the cars fail to make it a winner is crowned. This is where my suspicions about the Hiluxes' performance chips are confirmed.

Anyone that has driven a diesel Hilux in the sand will understand that it is somewhat of a donkey. Sand is not what the Hilux was designed for, and dune driving even less so. But still Frikkie Engels (the same person who built the Uris) wins the dune charge for the four cylinders with his Hilux.

Lastly the big boys line up. The Prado is leading the pack and Kobus le Grange's Uri is quietly idling at the back of the group. With a great noise the Prado easily gets up the dune the first few times. The Range Rover Sport's first attempt leaves a piece of plastic fender behind. After that it seems as if the driver loses interest and he also drops out of the event.

At last, it's the two Uris and the Prado that are battling it out for the top position. "The Uri eats dunes for breakfast," Kobus tells me later next to the fire as



HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

The Koës Pan Rally had its beginning in 1985, when Koos Retief and Jan Tyres, the school principal, got into an argument about whose bakkie was the best. Ewert Smith (of Uri fame) went along with them when they decided to settle the argument on the pan and between the dunes. From there, Koos Retief, along with the other founding members, which includes Kiewiet de Villiers, decided that it would be a good idea to host the rally every year. Over the years it became a very popular event, and the Koës Pan Rally now forms part of a three stage championship that takes place in Keetmanshoop, Koës and Swakopmund. The men who take it seriously participate in all three stages to decide a winner, while those who just do it for fun only participate in one or two of the stages.

he celebrates his victory. From a nearly impossible point, his Uri with the Lexus engine and Hilux diff's won the dune charge. And next year, long after the dust has settled and the engines have shut down, he will be here again, because he's been coming to the rally devotedly for the last few years.

The next morning when most of the competitors have left town and the roosters have returned to their usual posts, Jeremi and I are sitting, trying to scrounge up the enthusiasm to pack up camp and head home. Out of the blue he says to me: "Start the bakkie and rev it a bit, it's too quiet here all of a sudden." 🚗

I WANT TO GO TOO!

When? The Koës Pan Rally takes place every year over the first weekend of July. For more information on the event, or to enter, contact Hester de Villiers at plaashansa@iway.com.na; ☎ +264 81 275 5498.

Where? Koës is in the south east of Namibia, about 130 km to the north east of Keetmanshoop.

What did you drive? We drove a new Volkswagen Amarok 2.0 BiTDi with an eight speed automatic gearbox. The perfect vehicle for such a long trip.

Fuel consumption? Between 9 and 10 litre/100 km.

Where can I stay?

- The tented town of I Dream Africa offers tents that are already pitched and have beds; you only bring your own bedding. They also have warm water ablutions and breakfast is provided. Contact I Dream Africa Tours & Safaris at www.idreamafrica.com.na; ☎ +27 81 126 8086.
- The Koës Farmers Society's camp site outside town has nice spots under the trees, with running water and ablution facilities with a donkey for hot water. Contact Eugene Vermeulen at ☎ +264 81 128 0126.



AIR CRAFT. A Sandmaster, like P.W. Karsten's (pictured), is designed to be able to leave the ground now and then. The special shock absorbers are purpose-built to take the impact.

Magic in the

A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a row of rustic wooden log stools, some with armrests, are arranged on a rocky, gravelly ground. The stools are made of thick, cut logs and are weathered. The ground is covered in small, reddish-brown stones and sparse, low-lying desert vegetation. In the background, a vast, flat desert plain stretches out to distant, hazy mountains under a sky with soft, golden light from the setting sun. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

KICK DOWN A GEAR. If you're lucky enough, you can join the other visitors at Tankwa Tented Camp for a drink here on Sundowner Hill. It's a special experience.

ankwa

When Charles Thompson drove a circular route through **SUTHERLAND AND THE TANKWA KAROO**, he was expecting lots of passes, stars and cold weather. But he got much more than that.

PHOTOS: CHARLES THOMPSON

The night before leaving for Sutherland, I ask my wife to check the weather forecast. “Sunday’s max is 4°C and the minimum is -8°C. Can that be?” she asks. I remind her that Sutherland is one of the coldest towns in the country. “Well,” she says, “at least it gets better. The maximum is 8°C by Tuesday.”

I hit the road early the next morning. A sprinkling of snow covers the Matroosberg Mountain like icing sugar, but the Witzenberg Mountains, past Prince Alfred Hamlet, are a lot whiter.

On the gravel road between Op-dieberg and the Tankwa Padstal, things start to get pretty – wide plains stretch out around me with sandstone rock formations rising up here and there.

The Fortuner’s thermometer shows me that it’s 6°C, but when I get out to take a photo, I realise that is a bit optimistic. The vehicle’s thermometer doesn’t have a skin to feel how this icy wind cuts through you.

I pull my beanie further down over my ears.

Just beamin'

The Katbakkies Pass is my first pass for the day. It's beautiful enough, but so easy to drive that I pass two slick BMW sedans along the way. I guess they're on their way back from the Kaggas Kamma Nature Reserve, which is also on this road.

By one in the afternoon, the sky starts turning grey. I'm watching it change as I stand on a hill taking photos, and my first guess is there's rain coming. But when the drops hit my jacket, it sounds like someone threw a handful of sugar at me, and I realise it is snow!

I reach the next pass shortly after. The views over the Tankwa from Peerboomskloof Pass are postcard pretty, but every time I try to get out for a photograph, the snow drives me back inside the vehicle.

Soon, the GPS has nothing to show except topographical lines. Here and there, a windmill straddles the Karoo shrubs or a chalk-white Karoo house gazes into the distance. But they're few and far between.

The only things I really see are the olive-green Karoo veld, a long gravel road curling further into the distance after every turn, and a blue-grey sky that looks like it means business.

A signpost welcomes me to the Hantam Karoo, and the thermometer simultaneously falls from 12°C to a sharp 8°C. I quickly forget about the cold though, because my last pass for the day, the Ouberg Pass, is a true pleasure to drive.

It's not very technical, but rocky enough to keep you on your toes. You climb high above the Karoo landscape until you reach a breath-taking view of the world around you.

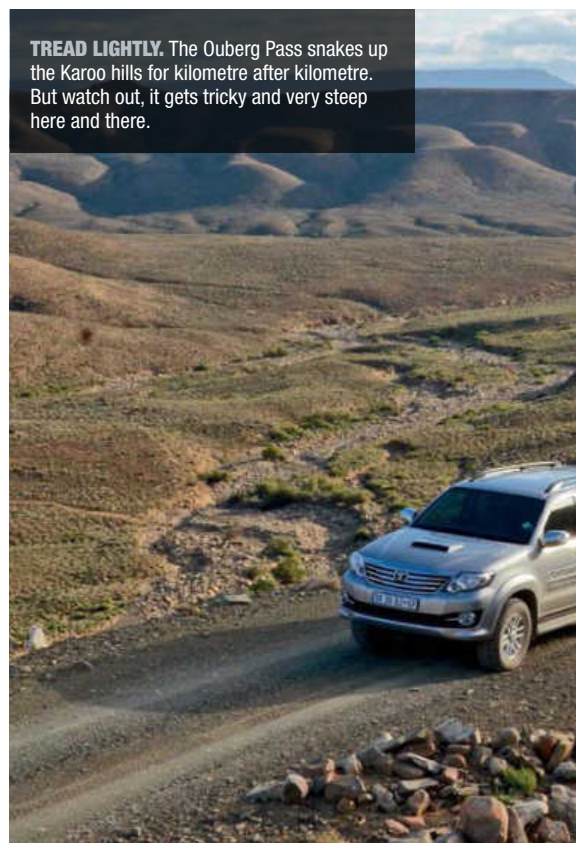
The sun is already dipping behind the Karoo koppies when I reach the end of the pass, where a muddy mess awaits me. The Fortuner slithers around like a snake on some of the worst patches, and I'm glad I'm in a 4x4. The temperature has dropped to an unfriendly 2°C, but I have a feeling that's not the end of it.

Wide open space

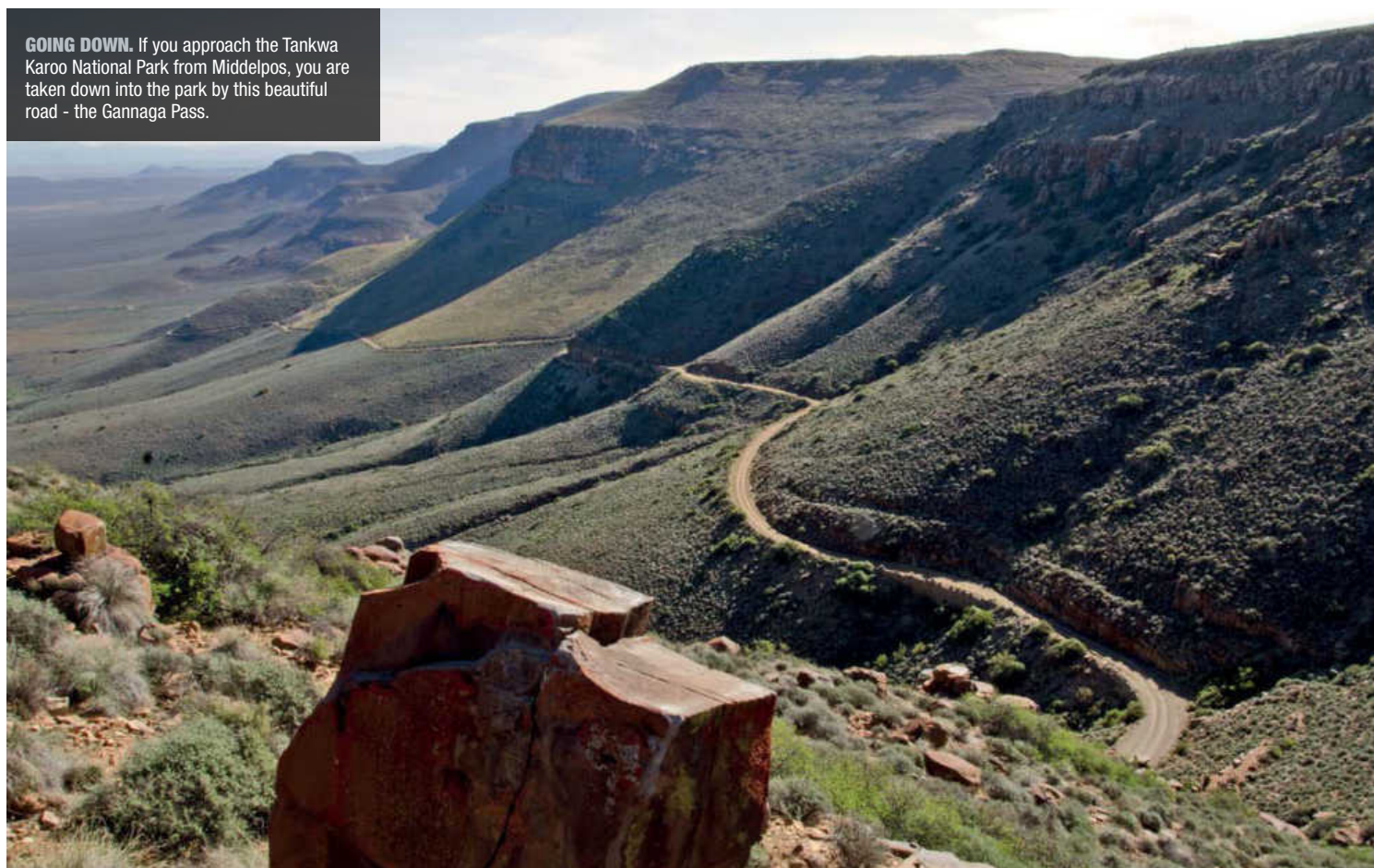
I reach Sutherland just before six. It's 1°C above freezing and there isn't a car in sight. I see only two people shuffling along in thick jackets and scarves.

But at the Whitehouse Inn, where I'm spending the night, things are looking cosy. The bar is warm and filled with people enjoying dinner or a drink. I eat

TREAD LIGHTLY. The Ouberg Pass snakes up the Karoo hills for kilometre after kilometre. But watch out, it gets tricky and very steep here and there.



GOING DOWN. If you approach the Tankwa Karoo National Park from Middelpos, you are taken down into the park by this beautiful road - the Gannaga Pass.

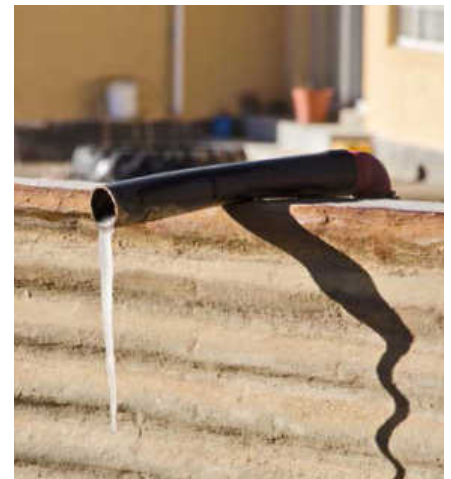




TA-TA TRAFFIC. It's not uncommon to find Sutherland's streets this quiet. Even in winter, the "high" season. What a joy!

COLD COUNTRY. Sutherland isn't known as one of the coldest towns in South Africa for nothing. This water pipe was still frozen solid at 11:00 in the morning.

WHITE JULY. Don't come to Sutherland in the winter without anti-freeze in your engine. Our Fortuner looked like a block of ice in the morning.



quickly though, and rush off to my room to get ready, because I'm meeting Jurg Wagener for a guided tour of the Sutherland skies by night.

I struggle as I try to put on just about all the clothing I packed, but Oom Jurg's message for me at the Whitehouse was clear: "Dress *very* warmly."

I'll probably never know what Jurg looks like though. It's a new moon and I meet him and the rest of the tour group at 8pm in a pitch dark shelter outside his house at the very edge of town. The only light here comes from tiny red LEDs on three staunch telescopes and Jurg's headlamp, also red, which he only switches on occasionally. People use red light in situations like these because it doesn't mess with your night vision the way bright white light does.

The voice under the headlamp is full of quips as it tells us all about the night sky. It is -3°C out here, but Jurg's sense of humour has us forgetting about the cold.

He explains how to find true south using the stars, as he points to the sky with a thin green laser. "You draw a line like this and like that," he explains, "and to compensate for the red wine, you also draw a line here and here."

Later he explains that light is so fast it travels around the earth seven times in



the time it takes to snap your fingers. He then points to a globular cluster, Omega Centauri, which is 16 000 light years away. "A bit further than Pofadder, hey?"

I chuckle, but my mind travels far and wide as I gaze upwards. It's a cliché by now to say that the stars make you feel small. But standing here, I really do.

When I wake up the next morning the windows in my room have frozen up – on the inside! Beyond them, the entire landscape is covered in a thin layer of ice. When I walk, it sounds like my shoes break every blade of grass underfoot.

After breakfast, the owner of the inn, Ian Rossouw, suggests that we defrost the Fortuner's windows with some lukewarm water. But surely they will melt in the morning sun, I almost say. When we pour water over them and I switch on the wiper

blades, the vehicle's thermometer reads -2°C, and it's already ten in the morning!

I take a drive through town and head for Middelpos around noon. There, I drink a quick coffee and enter the Tankwa Karoo National Park soon after.

You couldn't ask for a better introduction to the park than Gannaga Pass. Soon the Tankwa opens up suddenly and dramatically before me. High mountains surround a dusty plain that stretches out for kilometres on end. Far below, on the valley floor, where the mountains end in soft waves, the bottom of the pass curves into the distance like a brown snake.

I turn my music down, and eventually off. The silence is all-encompassing.

Good vibrations

A corrugated road that makes me wish for a gum guard eventually brings me to >

the gate of Stonehenge Nature Reserve. I'll be spending the next two nights here, at the Tankwa Tented Camp.

I don't know what to make of the place at first. It looks like a mix between a desert outpost, a biker bar, a farm and a circus. To the left of me there's a caravan, pieces of metal lying on the ground and a beat up old Combi. To the right on a hill, a giant metal creature stands ready to devour a stone building at its side.

At the tented camp, a friendly Malawian called Charlos Alam helps me settle in quickly. I notice with some relief that there's a gas heater and thick duvets inside my tent.

While I'm unloading the vehicle, a man roars up on an enduro motorcycle. "JP de Villiers," he introduces himself with a sturdy handshake. He's a "horizontally blessed" man, and across his broad chest his shirt reads *ALS IS ALTYD LEKKER* (Everything's always *lekker*).

JP is one of the co-owners of Stonehenge and he and his family, as well as a few friends, are on holiday here. He invites me to join them at the bar and restaurant in a few hours.

The Onverklaar Bar, the camp's bar, is a mix between a biker bar, an antique store and the set of Top Gear. There's too much paraphernalia to mention – hub caps, underwear, a ceiling full of hats, even a small 50 cc motorbike.

Charlos tells me that dinner is ready and I go to the dining room. We walk through a large room where old car seats are packed in a circle around a big fire-place. Outside there's a small pool, built with a hole in the centre in which to make a fire. It's called the "Gene Pool," I gather from a sign post. At one end of the room there's a big Harley Davidson.

Then I open another door into a cosy dining room with another warm fire. Charlos takes up his position behind the dinner spread. He's made pap and relish and the chops are fresh off the fire.

I'm travelling alone, but there are two more placemats at my table. It's not long before two guys join me. They introduce themselves as Helio Lobo and Nick Raphael. Helio has a head of hair that looks like a hair salon exploded. If he hid here in the veld, I think you'd easily mistake him for a tumbleweed.

He speaks with a foreign accent and I find out he's from Mozambique but lives in Cape Town. Nick is a tall, thin American from Wisconsin. He explains that the two of them are here to work on some of the Africa Burn festival's service

“There's a 4x4 route and lots of accommodation, but the Tankwa isn't about crossing a bunch of things off an itinerary.

vehicles. The famous festival, I find out, takes place right here on the Stonehenge property, and these two free spirits have been involved in it for years.

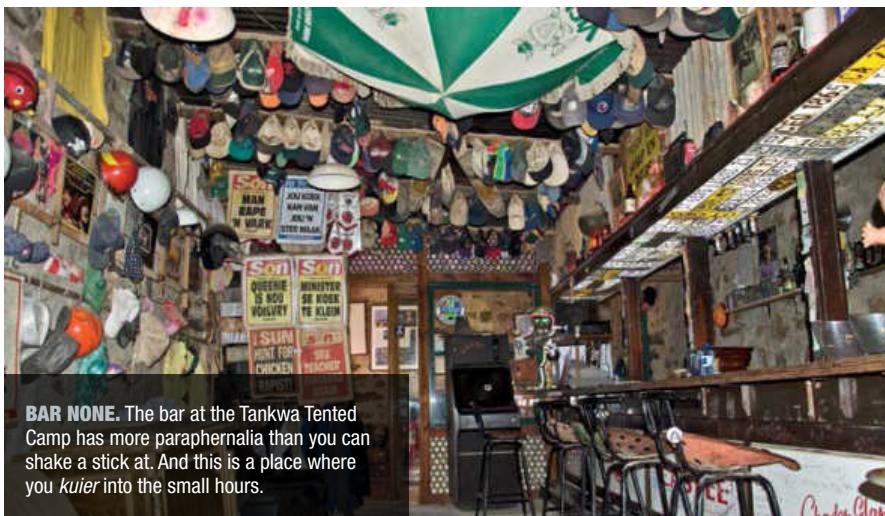
Helio is a musician and Nick works at festivals like this all over the world. It's clear these gentlemen go wherever the river of life takes them.

The conversation flows and Nick tells me about his old Hilux, one of those with the 2.8 diesel engine and solid front axle. He says, "I lifted the suspension and fitted bigger tyres. Now I can go anywhere I want in this *Karoo*," he explains, as the r's roll off his tongue.

The conversation keeps going back to cars and he goes on to tell me about one he wants to buy. A friend, he says, modified the Series II Land Rover with a system of levers and CV joints so you can drive it from a platform above the cabin.

At "the Burn," Nick says, he drives it like this, from above.

When I return to my tent late that night, I notice something stuck above the zip with a tiny peg. It's the words from a Bob Marley song, written in blue marker on a small piece of paper: *Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds*.



BAR NONE. The bar at the Tankwa Tented Camp has more paraphernalia than you can shake a stick at. And this is a place where you *kujier* into the small hours.



QUIET TIME. Guests at the Tankwa Tented Camp share a moment on Sundowner Hill.

During the night, jackals perform a concert somewhere out on the plains.

New roads, new friends

“There’s a cold front passing over today,” JP says while the two of us and his friend Socks eat breakfast the next morning.

He explains that he, Socks and two other friends own the nature reserve and that Africa Burn rents a piece of the property from them for their annual festival.

He’s wearing his *ALS IS ALTYD LEKKER* t-shirt again and I quickly realise JP lives by this creed. He’s a jovial guy whose face beams and the three of us chew the fat (not just the bacon) at the table.

JP’s love for the Karoo is palpable. He was born in the Hantam (so that’s why he’s still in shorts, I realise) and although he farms outside Montagu now, his love for this part of the world has never died.

“Every time I came here, something inside said: You’re home now. When the opportunity arose to buy into Stonehenge, I didn’t need to think about it at all!”

He spends a whole month out here before the festival to prepare everything at the camp, he says, and Stonehenge takes part in the festival too.

“We donate a thousand litres of white wine and a thousand litres of red every year,” he explains. “It goes down *lekker*. Last year, we finished the white and only brought back about 50 litres of red wine. The party goers seem to enjoy the white a bit more when it’s warm.”

After breakfast I head for the Tankwa.

They get about three drops of rain every year, JP said earlier, and “when that happens, the whole veld gets this green hue.”

Out here in the Tankwa, I see exactly what he means – the landscape teems with plant life, with leaves and flowers



SUNDAY BEST. A tie is a must if you want to join the crowd on Sundowner Hill, and Stonehenge co-owner JP de Villiers leads by example.

THE LION'S SHARE. Leeueberg 4x4 route in the Tankwa Karoo National Park is a good challenge, with a few obstacles where you have to aim well, and beautiful views.



that cover it like a blanket.

When I was researching the park and talking to JP and the guys, I was looking for stuff to do in the Tankwa. But as I take a leisurely drive through it, I realise that’s not what the Tankwa is about. Yes, there’s a 4x4 route or two, and lots of accommodation, but the Tankwa isn’t about crossing a bunch of things off an itinerary.

The park almost quadrupled in size in the past few years, growing from 27 064 hectare to almost 150 000. That’s great, but it also means that the roads, the sign posts, my GPS and Tracks4Africa map don’t always speak the same language.

One of the roads I take, for example, starts at a sign post that says it leads to an office. But where it ends, there’s nothing more than a few ruins. Another road simply ends in the veld.

Luckily, you can’t really get lost, the guys told me this morning. “Just head more or less to the left or more or less to the right and you’ll get where you want to go,” said Socks. With the GPS and T4A, I can mostly figure out what road I’m on and I take my time through the park.

I decide to head up to the Leeueberg 4x4 route in the north-west of the park, but when I reach the starting point, an internal debate ensues.

Between the warnings on my GPS and those from JP, I know full well that Tankwa’s roads can be real tyre takers. I walk a few hundred metres over some

obstacles and see quite a few disturbingly sharp rocks and stones in the way.

As I walk back to the Fortuner I reckon, no, let’s decide to not be stupid today. What would Jaco say if I got back to the office with a damaged test vehicle (*Indeed – Jaco*)? What would Toyota say? What would my mum say?!

To make things worse, there’s absolutely no cell phone reception. What if I shred two tyre sidewalls at once?

I’m already making a U-turn when the adrenaline gets the better of me. I turn back, choose a line and drive.

The route takes you over a bunch of great rock obstacles, one of them up a steep hill. Then you climb, hill for hill, to a lookout point with a breath-taking view over the Tankwa. It looks like the landscape has just been painted.

After the last peak, you drop down at a scary angle before hitting an axle-twister of a hill over loose shale. Then you drive down a sandy riverbed for a few kilometres before it spits you out on a plateau to the north of the park.

In the end, Leeueberg wasn’t bad on the tyres at all, and I arrive at the end of it with all five of my Bridgestone AT’s intact. You will find a sharp stone here and there, but if you keep your eyes open, you’ll be fine.

Animals and sundowners

There’s one more section of the park I >

want to see – the north-eastern corner. I'm glad about the decision, because I see more game here than anywhere else.

After some gemsbok there's an eland standing dead-still right next to the gravel road. She looks me straight in the eye, and when I get close, I see a tiny calf.

The little creature is still wet with afterbirth. But I don't have lots of time to watch it – the mother drops her head and storms at the Fortuner with a grunt.

Shortly after, two bat-eared foxes appear in the veld. It looks like they want to play with the Fortuner. They dart around, run a few metres, turn around and stare at me. I only drive off when I can't see them anymore.

The next thing I know, it's almost four o'clock and time to return to camp. JP invited me for a drink on Sundowner Hill, and both Nick and one of the other owners of Stonehenge told me it's one of


the highlights of any visit.

Sundowner Hill is a formal affair and you have to look presentable. Don't worry if your Sunday suit is at home. There's a long row of ties waiting at On-verklaar Bar.

At the top of the hill, we crack open drinks. JP is dressed in a pink tie, a fancy hat with a red feather, a cream-coloured jacket and a shirt with the words "Tankwa Biker Burn" on it.

He delivers a short "speech" about the surrounding landscape, rivers, plant life and the reserve. Then, just before the sun sets, he asks us to sit completely still – no talking, no "fidgeting" and no drinking – until the sun sets.

With a view that stretches into next Wednesday, each of us sits completely still on Sundowner Hill, alone with our thoughts, as a bright red disc disappears behind the Cederberg Mountains.

We end the night in the piping-hot Gene Pool. Every few minutes a shooting star swipes across the night sky. The Milky Way looks like a long smoke column above us. "Tomorrow," says JP, "we'll put up a wind pump." I ask if he needs more water here. "No, I don't think we'll even connect it. But in the Karoo, every place needs a wind pump, don't you think?" he says with a smile. 

I WANT TO GO TOO!

BEST TIME TO GO: The winters are cold, but it's a special time in the Karoo, especially Sutherland. It's best to try avoid the sweltering summers.

WHAT DID YOU GO WITH? A Toyota Fortuner 3.0 D-4D (4x4).

FUEL CONSUMPTION? 8,9 litre/100 km.

WHAT WERE THE ROADS LIKE? The dirt roads were in a good condition during my visit, but they can get nasty when it rains. The area is also infamous for sharp rocks that can destroy tyres. If you only come in one vehicle, make sure it's in top condition, especially the spare wheel. If you land in trouble here, you'll wait or walk for a long time to get help.

PHONE RECEPTION? Very little, and only in Sutherland.

BEST PLACE TO SEE GAME? I saw the most animals in the north-east of the Tankwa National Park.

DO YOU NEED A 4X4? If you want to do the Leeuberg 4x4 trail, definitely, but a soft roader is fine for the dirt roads and passes.

ACCOMMODATION:

THE WHITEHOUSE INN, SUTHERLAND:

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✉ info@sutherlandwhitehouse.co.za

TANKWA TENTED CAMP: R250 p.p.p.n.

☎ 082 899 1333

✉ Maryke: bodemloos@zuluoverland.co.za

FUEL: You can fill up your tank in Sutherland and Middelpos. Tankwa Tented Camp might also be able to help if it's an emergency.

NOTE: A Sterland tour costs R100. Contact Jurg Wagener ☎ 082 556 9589;

✉ info@sutherlandinfo.co.za.

Don't waste your time going to the observatory if you didn't pre-book a visit to SALT. You can do a self-guided tour of the telescopes on Saturdays and public holidays, but not during the week.

Note that the well-known Tankwa Padstal is closed on Wednesdays.



The best braai wood is...



When people start arguing about braai wood, they become hotter under the collar than the coals themselves. But which wood is the best? To answer that question, we took out the matches and had the most popular types of wood fight it out.

TEXT & PHOTOS: GERRIE VAN EEDEN

When you want to cook like a man, an oven tray just doesn't cut it. There is something about a fire that calls to the prehistoric nature in a guy. That's not even mentioning the atmosphere and *kuier* around the fire.

But there is only one way to determine which wood is "the best": You gather wood from all over South Africa (charcoal and briquettes didn't make the cut!) and subject it to a few tests.

AVAILABILITY AND PROTECTION

A wide variety of woods are used each week in braai fires around the country. But even though most are region-specific, it helps to know which one will work best in the environment that you find yourself in.

The eight wood types we decided to test are those that are quite commonly available. This of course excludes your Uncle John's special peach tree wood that he used to braai those awesome sosaties that one Christmas. If you can't find it at a shop, kiosk or gas station, it wasn't considered.

Then there is also the question of endangered species. On our list there are two types of wood that fall into this classification – Leadwood and camel thorn. But the wood that we used is not chopped off from living trees and dried for fire wood. It comes from trees that are dead; the wood is then re-worked and sold for fire wood. Thus it doesn't threaten the species' existence.

Our choices eventually consisted of: mopane, blackthorn (*swarthaak*), red bush (*rooibos*), camel thorn (*kameeldoring*), red-eyed wattle (*rooikrans*), Leadwood, black wattle and sickle bush (*sekelbos*)

THE TEST

To make eight different fires and wait for each one to burn down to coals wouldn't be very clever. So we booked the camp site of Welgelegen 4x4 near Stellenbosch for a day and used their braai facilities where one can make four fires next to one another.

For each fire an equal amount of wood was set aside and two fire lighters were allowed per fire. If more was needed to get the fire burning, we mention it.

After the fire was lit, we measured how long it took to burn down to coals. This already gave an indication of how good or bad the wood would be (if your braai fire is burnt out in less than half an hour, you should know that the coals probably won't last long).

When the fire was burnt out, and the coals were ready to

be spread open, we started the timer again. After that we regularly took the temperature with an infrared thermometer until the coals had been left for two hours. We never spread them out or took the ash off. By doing so we made sure that no wood had an advantage over any other.

We also did not braai anything on the coals while we were testing them, but after two hours some were still hot enough to cook a piece of boerewors or two.

Furthermore, no changes were made to the fire once it was burning. The most that we did was to return a burning piece of wood to the top of the fire if it had rolled off. Every fire was measured where it was made, and the temperature of the coals was taken regularly as they sat.

After two hours most fires' temperatures started dropping markedly. So we could see which one kept its heat the best, and also which one was the hottest wood.

We also gave marks on the ease with which the fire was made – whether it was a struggle to light it or if it started to burn easily.

The amount of smoke also determines how enjoyable the fire is to sit around once the meat is cooked. For this reason we awarded points for how little the wood smoked. Smokiness was measured out of 10, with 10 being a lot and 1 being a little.

If you take all this information into consideration, you can determine which wood will work best to cook chicken slowly, or to quickly sear a steak so that it remains juicy.

HOW DO YOU PACK A FIRE?

There are two primary ways to stack a fire with wood pieces of about 30 cm in length. The biggest determining factor is whether the wood is wet or dry. For wet wood the best approach is to build a pyramid. Any remaining oils or tree sap that is left in the wood will boil out of the bottom ends of it.

The other way is the so-called "Scottish fire". Begin with two pieces of wood on the ground, parallel to each other. Then you put two other pieces across them and carry on until you have no more wood. This makes it easy to add more wood on top. We packed our fires this way.

LEADWOOD

The leader

1 There is a reason that this is called Leadwood. It is a solid,

dark, compacted wood that is also used for furniture and wooden sleepers. Leadwood is an endangered species, but we got some left-over wood from a furniture manufacturer.

In nature, the trees can grow to be over 1000 years old. Because the wood is so dense, the trees often remain standing long after dying. It is often used in the wild to make fires which burn all night to ward off wild animals.

Flammability: 6

Smokiness: 6

Time to coals: 1:28

1st temperature reading

(burning wood): 629,3°C

2nd reading (0:00): 748,1°C

3rd reading (0:15): 672,3°C

4th reading (0:30): 687,9°C

5th reading (1:00): 680,6°C

6th reading (1:30): 638,8°C

Last reading (2:00): 594,0°C

Average temperature:
670,2°C

COMMENT: Leadwood easily had the highest average temperature of all the wood in our test. The flames are not very big, but the wood burns for a long time. So it is not the

ideal social fire, but it works like a charm if you still want to have coals to make coffee in the morning when you're camping. It takes some effort to light the fire due to the wood's density. The ash forms a thick layer on the coals that you can just blow off after a few hours if you want to have hot coals again.





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MOPANE

No, not the worm

2 Mopane trees are found in the northern parts of the country (as is the worm) and along with camel thorn, it is the most common fire wood in the north. It looks quite similar to camel thorn and is well adapted against pests, so you will always find sturdy solid pieces with which to build your fire.

Flammability: 6

Smokiness: 7

Time to coals: 0:43

1st temperature reading

(burning wood): 535,1°C
2nd reading (0:00): 583,5°C
3rd reading (0:15): 648,0°C
4th reading (0:30): 604,1°C
5th reading (1:00): 552,0°C
6th reading (1:30): 390,1°C
Last reading (2:00): 263,6°C
Average temperature: 506,8°C

COMMENT: Mopane wood burns quite easily, with enough flames to make a nice fire to socialise around, but it burns out quickly. It was disappointing that the coals did not stay hot for long. It also didn't reach a very high temperature, which should make it ideal to braai chicken slowly.



RED BUSH

Not just a tea

3 The only comparison between red bush wood and a hot drink is the name. This wood is dark red and it burns with smallish flames. It is mainly available in the northern parts of the country.



Last reading (2:00): 423,3°C
Average temperature: 559,2°C

Flammability: 7

Smokiness: 9

Time to coals: 0:42°C

1st temperature reading

(burning wood): 652,1°C

2nd reading (0:00): 552,5°C

3rd reading (0:15): 676,8°C

4th reading (0:30): 664,3°C

5th reading (1:00): 578,5°C

6th reading (1:30): 459,9°C

COMMENT: Initially the red bush wood burned well, but it soon turned to ash. The sudden drop in temperature means that it is not the best for a good braai. Because it burns so easily, you may consider combining it with a wood that makes better coals, but doesn't burn as easily.

BLACK WATTLE

The Aussie's black sheep

4 This wood was originally imported from Australia as fire wood and timber for construction. These days it is considered an invasive species that threatens the grazing land of livestock and wild animals. Black wattle is rather commonly available as fire wood, does not weigh much and is light in colour.

Flammability: 6

Smokiness: 5

Time to coals: 1:11

1st temperature reading

(burning wood): 428,5°C
2nd reading (0:00): 629,9°C
3rd reading (0:15): 647,2°C
4th reading (0:30): 590,7°C
5th reading (1:00): 501,8°C
6th reading (1:30): 462,4°C
Last reading (2:00): 341,4°C
Average temperature: 528,9°C

COMMENT: This wood was slightly wet, which is a



common occurrence with black wattle. It took some effort to get it going, but once it was burning, it made good

flames. Once it was burnt out, it appeared to be dead, but the coals stayed warm for longer than expected.





SICKLE BUSH

The Jacques Kallis of braai's

5 The sickle bush is found all over the southern hemisphere. You will find it in the northern parts of South Africa. It is darkish red and once it is dry, the bark usually falls off completely. Because the tree does not grow very high, thick logs are scarce, but those that you do get are thick, heavy wood pieces that make good coals.

Flammability: 6

Smokiness: 7

Time to coals: 1:01

1st temperature reading (burning wood): 719,6°C

2nd reading (0:00): 699,1°C

3rd reading (0:15): 690,9°C

4th reading (0:30): 679,2°C

5th reading (1:00): 620,5°C

6th reading (1:30): 583,7°C

Last reading (2:00): 500,0°C

Average temperature:

628,9°C

COMMENT: After Leadwood, this wood has the highest average coal temperature. Also, its availability is not limited to the northern parts of the country. It burns out slowly, retains heat for long and it makes good coals – a good bowler, batsman and fielder



Thanks guys! Drive Out's readers on the Kampvuur forum helped to choose the wood types and helped us source the wood. Whether it was sent by courier to the Cape, or sent via a friend

of a friend that was on holiday, we would just like to say thank you to Fanus Sherman, At Fourie, Barry Fourie, Willem Beneke and Jacques Odendal who supplied the wood.



CAMEL THORN

Child of the Kalahari

6 Camel thorn wood is probably the most popular wood of the lot, and is available all over Southern Africa. You can recognise it from the red centre and the lighter white part around the outside of the pit. You may only use this endangered species' wood if the tree died naturally in the wild.

Flammability: 6

Smokiness: 6

Time to coals: 0:45

1st temperature reading (burning wood): 791,8°C

2nd reading (0:00): 739,2°C

3rd reading (0:15): 691,1°C

4th reading (0:30): 666,8°C

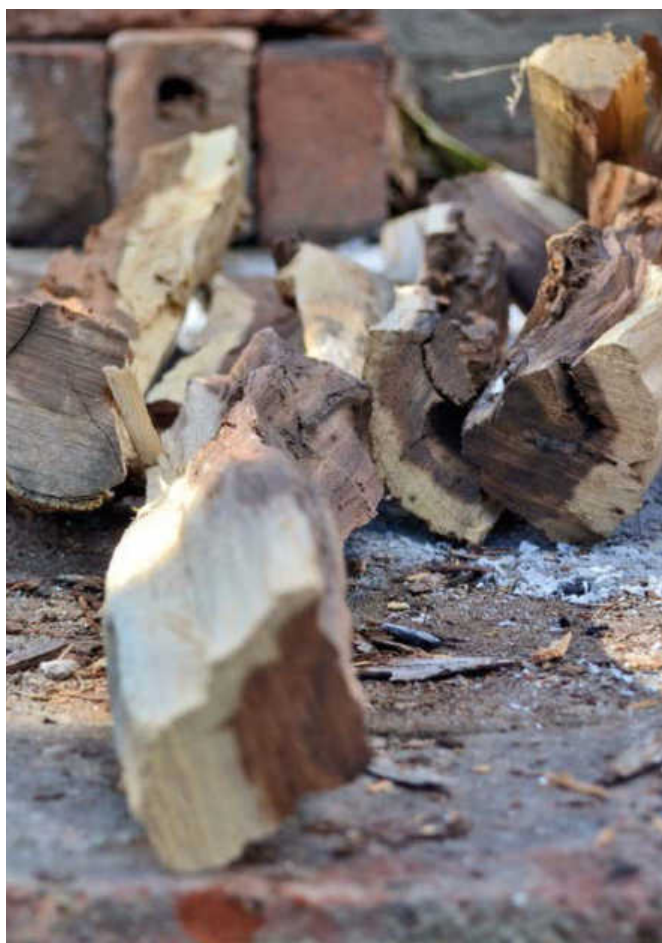
5th reading (1:00): 513,2°C

6th reading (1:30): 469,3°C

Last reading (2:00): 402,5°C

Average temperature:
580,3°C

COMMENT: Camel thorn is popular for a reason. It burns well once you get it going (though it may take some coaxing to light it) and the coals remain hot for a relatively long time. It cools down rather quickly after the first hour, but that is not the end of the world. Because camel thorn is so readily available, you can easily buy another bag and chuck it on the fire.



BLACKTHORN Another thorny subject

7 The blackthorn is a tree that is found throughout Africa. It is often used for fencing, feed and to build huts. It is a less-dense type of wood than the camel thorn, and thus burns a lot quicker. It also looks a lot like camel thorn, but the centre is darker rather than red.

Flammability: 10
Smokiness: 8
Time to coals: 0:34
1st temperature reading (burning wood): 704,9°C
2nd reading (0:00): 736,7°C
3rd reading (0:15): 651,8°C
4th reading (0:30): 668,8°C
5th reading (1:00): 623,1°C
6th reading (1:30): 469,8°C
Last reading (2:00): 360,9°C
Average temperature: 585,1°C



COMMENT: Of all the types of wood that we tested, this is the one that burned the easiest. By the time that I lit the camel thorn fire next to it, the blackthorn was well on its way, already boasting big flames and searing heat. The coals were not that impressive, but they were on par with the camel thorn. The blackthorn retains its heat longer, but once it starts to cool down, it cools down quickly. In nature, the tree does not produce an abundance of thick logs, and that is where camel thorn is better.

RED-EYED WATTLE Another Aussie

8 The red-eyed wattle is also an invasive species from Australia. It was originally imported to prevent wind erosion on coastal dunes. Today it is a pest that is commonly available in the Cape and is regularly used as fire wood. The demand is actually so high that you hardly ever find dried-out red-eyed wattle wood. If you buy it wet, you have to leave it for a few weeks to dry out first. We had a dry bag for our test.

Flammability: 7
Smokiness: 7

Time to coals: 0:42
1st temperature reading (burning wood): 789,1°C
2nd reading (0:00): 772,1°C
3rd reading (0:15): 733,7°C
4th reading (0:30): 707,5°C
5th reading (1:00): 508,7°C
6th reading (1:30): 412,4°C
Last reading (2:00): 339,1°C
Average temperature: 578,9°C

COMMENT: Though the initial temperature is very hot, it lasts for about half an hour before cooling down quickly. The wood is not as dense as other wood types that we tested and completely burns to ashes without leaving coals. But it burns well for a social fire and if you have enough, you can braai on it for a while. As long as you're willing to make new coals often.



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The smallest GoPro yet



Hot on the heels of the GoPro Hero+, the manufacturer has now released the new GoPro Hero4 Session.

The Session is the smallest GoPro on the market to date. It is almost as big as two matchboxes placed on top of

each other and weighs the same as a packet of two minute noodles. But it's not light on features. The Hero4 Session shoots video in 1080p60, 720p100 or 1440p30 and takes 8MP photos – in single shots, bursts or time lapses.

This little guy is also kitted out with Superview, in order to take ultra wide shots, ProTune for outstanding image quality and smart technology for good photos and videos in low light.

You can control it with the button on the camera, through

the GoPro app on your phone or tablet or with the manufacturer's Smart Remote. It is water proof to a depth of 10m and you can use normal GoPro mounting accessories with it.

We particularly like the smart microphone system that has two microphones – one in the front and one at the back. If the camera detects that the wind is generating too much noise in the front, it automatically toggles to the back microphone.

PRICE: R6 499

AVAILABLE AT: Cape Union Mart, Sportsman's Warehouse, Outdoor Warehouse, Incredible Connection and some independent distributors.



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Recently I had just such a trip, a 650 km drive to the Karoo, and I decided to put the Seat Saint to the test. The

manufacturers say that it is filled with "medical grade" gel. The underside is made of a rubber-like material and there is a short tab at the back of it that you can push between the car seat and the back rest to make sure that the Seat Saint doesn't move around. And it didn't move a single centimetre.

Does the Seat Saint work? Let me put it this way: I only remembered it again when I got home, after doing 1 300 km. What better testimony can I give?

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SPECIAL READER OFFER

Spectacular Lesotho

See Sani Pass, Katse Dam, Maletsunyane Falls and Thaba Bosiu on a six-day, guided self-drive tour with Drive Out Tours, in conjunction with Bhejane 4x4 Adventures.



DAY 1: Our adventure starts in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands town of Himeville, where we meet at the Stone House Café.

For the rest of the day we do the awe-inspiring drive up Sani Pass. After clearing customs on the South African side, we have a picnic lunch and then make our way up the pass with more than enough time to enjoy the scenery and take many pictures.

Our accommodation for the night is the cosy Sani Mountain Lodge. It feels like you're literally on top of the world at this lodge, which is built on the edge of the Drakensberg and affords breath-taking views into KwaZulu-Natal.

DAY 2: Our route to Katse Dam takes us along the highest roads in Southern Africa. We cross the Senqu River, which becomes the Orange River when it enters South Africa.

The houses that we stay in at Katse overlook the dam. We relax with dinner in the restaurant.

DAY 3: After a big breakfast, we do a guided tour of the Katse Dam wall and learn more about the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. We spend the rest of the day driving a circle route around the dam, with a picnic lunch on the way, and return to our accommodation in the late afternoon.

DAY 4: We then head out, traversing mountain passes such as the God Help Me and Blue Mountain passes. We get a glimpse of the Mohale Dam, which is also part of the Highlands Water Project.

In the late afternoon we arrive in the small town of Ramabanta, where we stay over at the Trading Post Lodge for the next two nights and get spoilt with home-made food.

DAY 5: We take it easy today. We'll visit Maletsunyane Falls at Semonkong, where the water drops 192m down a cliff, have a picnic lunch and return to the lodge to relax for the afternoon. There are some lovely walks in the area and you can go horse riding.

DAY 6: After our last big breakfast together, we make our way towards Maseru. We drive around Thaba Bosiu before we say our goodbyes at the visitor centre near Maseru Bridge Border Post, and then everyone goes their own way.

COSTS AND DATES

DATES: 28 February to 4 March 2016

TOUR PRICE: R7550 per person (half-price for children under 10).

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- Breakfast and supper at the guest houses every day, and during the daily excursions the Bhejane guide and his assistant will be preparing picnic lunches for you.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PROVIDE:

- Valid passports and documentation required at a border post and any cross-border charges.
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MORE JUICE. This is how the tank fits in the Frontier. When it is installed for a trip, it is fixed in place by turnbuckles and completely covered by a rubber cover. The breather pipe in the back of the tank has been adjusted to be hidden neatly and safely.

AN EXTRA TANK in the boot

Extra room in your vehicle means there is space for an extra fuel tank. **And that means extra kilometres.** Carel Basson shows us how he extended his bakkie's range.

Text: Evan Naudé

Photos: Carel Basson

Carel Basson, a regional manager for Statistics SA from Krugersdorp, recently bought an Isuzu Frontier 4x4 3.2 V6. Since he's a man who likes to travel, its range of 600 to 650km was not sufficient. "I couldn't find a pre-made tank, and everybody who offered to build it, wanted between R5 500 and R7 000," he says. "So I took the bull by the horns and built my own."

Carel wanted the tank to be big enough to increase the vehicle's range to 1 000km, thus having a capacity of approximately 55 litres. It must fit in the boot space of the Frontier and therefore also has to be strong enough to support a fridge and ammo boxes that fit on top of it.

"The available space was 1000mm x 930mm. If the tank

were to be about 60mm high, it would be big enough to hold about 55 litres," Carel explains.

"Unfortunately I could only order whole stainless steel plates. That meant that the cost for a bigger tank would be the same as the 55 litre tank I had planned. So I decided to make the tank 100mm higher. My final measurements were 1 000mm x 930mm x 160mm so my fridge would still fit. The volume of the tank is now 148,8litre."

How does it work?

Gravity feeds fuel from the secondary tank to the original tank. To control the flow, I installed a 12V solenoid which I control with a switch in the vehicle.

I connected the two tanks to each other by putting a copper T-joint in the breather pipe of the original tank. Then I connected the drainage pipe via the solenoid to the T-joint.

I protected the T-joint with thick rubber so it doesn't get damaged on the chassis of the vehicle while I am driving.

Have you toured with it?

I went to Mozambique and the installation worked great. I filled

up in Punda Maria, drove to Chisubane and only on the way back to Krugersdorp, between Nylstroom and Warmbad, I put in 50 litres just to be safe. The tank expanded slightly after the welding settled and after I filled it up the first time I managed to get 150 litres in.

How has the tank improved your vehicle's range?

With the roughly 80 litres in the original tank (with 5 litre reserve) I can now cover about 1 700km with a total volume of 228,8 litre. I was worried that the extra weight of the new tank when full might influence road handling, but you don't even notice there is a tank in the back. I think the baffles that I put in the tank are very important.

Is there anything you would improve?

I will replace the solenoid with >

YOU WILL NEED

- 1,5 mm stainless steel plate
- Solenoid
- An electrical switch
- Inlet pipe and fuel cap
- Copper pipe fittings
- Rubber pipe
- Pipe clamps
- Eye bolts and turnbuckles for the anchoring points.

TOTAL COST: R5 300
(including cutting, welding and panel beating)

a tap. Less can go wrong with a tap and the hole on the solenoid is slightly too small for the Frontier's thirst when you put pedal to the metal. The original tank won't get empty, but it also won't get fuller!

Any advice for someone who wants to build this?

You must make sure the angle of tilt to the drainage point is sufficient, otherwise not all the

fuel will drain. Also make sure your connections between the pipes and the tank are securely fastened with proper clamps, otherwise your cab might start smelling like fuel.

Tools

- Measuring tape
- Welder
- Angle grinder to cut the steel
- A drill
- Screw drivers and spanners

The plan of action

- Start by measuring the space in which you want to fit the tank. When you've determined the area (length x width), you can calculate the depth you will need for the desired volume. For example, for a 55 litre tank in the 1000mm x 930mm space in Carel's Frontier, the tank has to be 60mm high.
- Cut the steel plates to these

measurements. Carel made the one side of his tank slightly higher so that the tank has a tilt towards the hole where the drainage pipe sits.

- Weld baffles to the bottom of the tanks so that the fuel doesn't slosh around. These plates also help carry the weight on top of the tank.
- Drill holes in the side panel on the same side as the vehicle's fuel cap – a bigger hole at the top for the inlet pipe and a smaller hole at the bottom for the drainage pipe.
- Drill a third hole on the opposite side of the tank for the breather pipe. This pipe regulates air pressure inside the tank.
- Weld connector pieces to the holes where the inlet and drainage pipe will be connected. Carel's inlet pipe is 54mm, the drainage pipe is 10mm and the breather pipe is 19mm.
- Weld the eye bolts to the outside of the tank on places corresponding to the anchoring points inside the vehicle.
- Now, drill a hole in the vehicle's body panel where the new inlet pipe from outside will go and a second hole in the floor where the drainage pipe will go.
- Carel asked a panel beater to install the fuel cap of an Opel Kadett. This kind of cap can lock from the outside.
- Test the tank properly before installation to make sure it does not leak. Position it so you can test the angle of tilt.
- Connect the rubber pipe between the fuel cap and the tank with pipe clamps.
- Cut the original tank's breather pipe and attach the copper T-joint.
- Connect the new tank's inlet pipe to the solenoid and the solenoid with the T-joint on the original tank's breather pipe with pipe clamps.
- Connect the solenoid with the switch in the front of the vehicle.
- Anchor the tank securely with the turnbuckles. 🛠️

STEP BY STEP

1 Measure and cut. Cut the steel plates for the tank according to the measurements of your vehicle.



2 Slosh stoppers. Weld the baffles to the inside of the tank to prevent the fuel from sloshing around in the tank.



3 In and out. Drill holes for the inlet and drainage pipes, as well as a third hole for the breather pipe. Weld the connectors for these pipes in place.



4 Build it. Weld the panels for the tank together. Make sure there are no leaks in the welding before you install the tank in the vehicle.



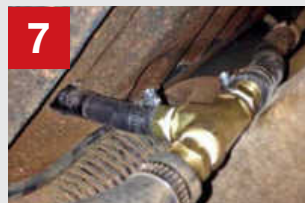
5 Tilt. Make sure the tank sits at a slight angle so the fuel runs towards the drainage pipe.



6 Connect it. Connect the inlet pipe with pipe clamps and the solenoid on the drainage pipe.



7 Feeder pipe. Carel put a T-joint on the original tank's breather pipe. His secondary pipe feeds the original tank this way.



8 Fill up. With a second fuel cap Carel can now fill up both tanks from outside the vehicle.




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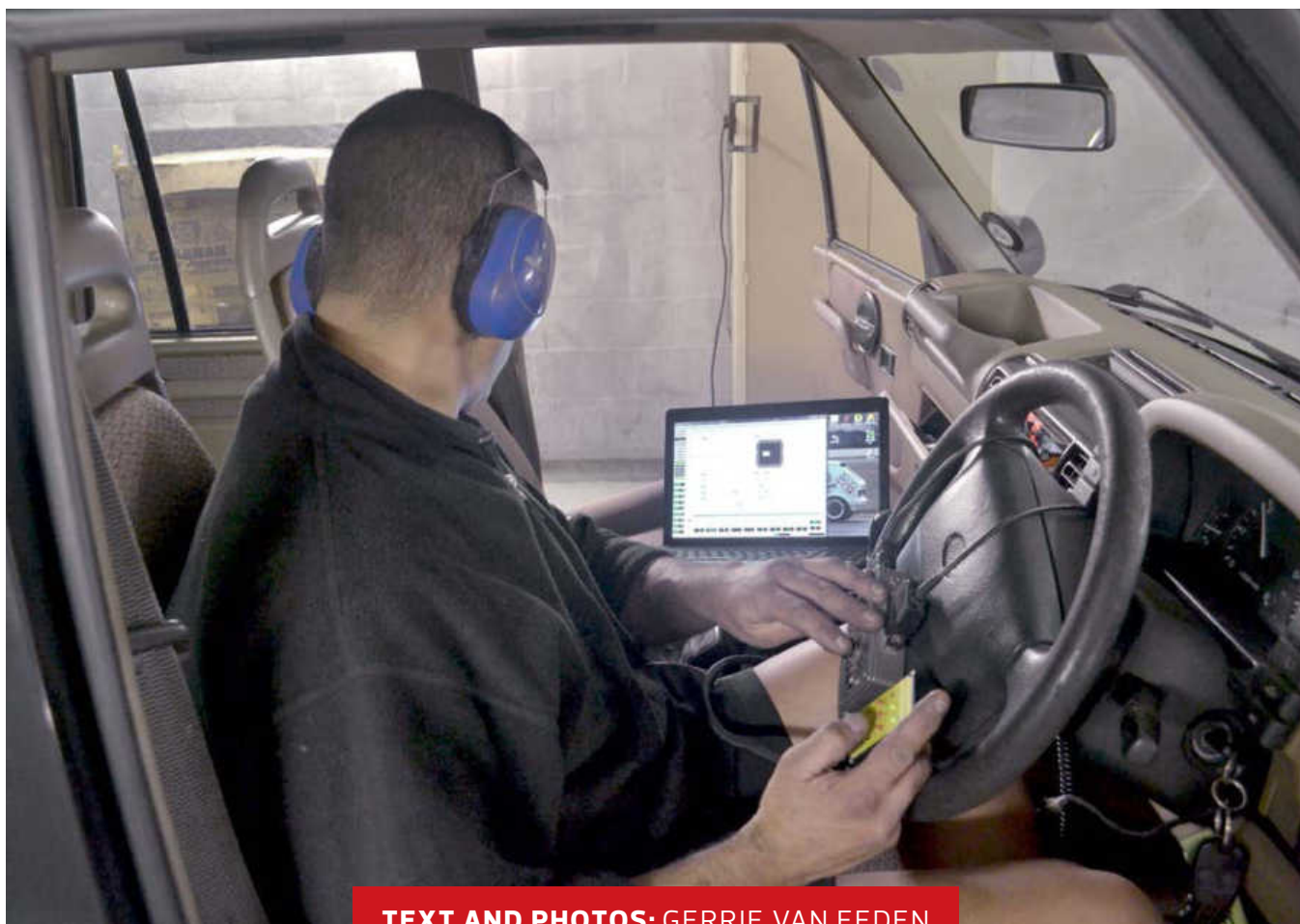


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TEXT AND PHOTOS: GERRIE VAN EEDEN

Chip it like **this**

A performance chip can be an excellent addition to your engine.

We show you how it is installed.

Last month the 4x4 Professor gave a lesson on how you can put more oomph in your vehicle. A performance chip was mentioned, but to understand how it works in greater detail, we checked in at Steve's Auto Clinic in Cape Town.

A quick recap

A performance chip does not replace any existing components in your vehicle's computer or electronic system. There are

many types of chips available, but they all basically do the same thing: They intercept the signals that the various sensors in your engine send to the electronic control unit (ECU).

These messages determine how the computer adapts to conditions in order to allow the engine to work efficiently. It controls things like fuel injection, how long the valves stay open, and even the engine's timing. These messages are modified by the performance chip ac-

cording to its programming, and this way you get more power out of your engine.

Want better fuel consumption? The chip can also adapt the ECU to your requirements.

We took my 1998 Land Rover Discovery I with a 3.9litre V8 petrol engine as a test vehicle to see how it works.

Put it on the dyno

The performance figures quoted by manufacturers may not necessarily be the same as the

actual figures. During mass production there are notable differences in the tolerance of different parts for engines. This partly explains the difference in engine performance on a dynamometer versus the performance according to the manufacturer's specs.

A dynamometer will show you exactly how much power your bakkie generates. It measures this using the rollers, which are turned by the wheels; this is then interpreted according to

wheel size, engine speed, vehicle type and model. Using this information the dyno determines the power and torque on the engine's flywheel.

Your vehicle specifications are quite a good indication of its power and torque, but because things like gear ratio, wheel size and resistance come into play, the flywheel is more accurate.

Those in the know say the chances of two dyno's giving exactly the same reading is quite unlikely, so a vehicle can produce 141 kW on one dyno and 135 kW on another due to differences in dynamometers.

Can you fool the system?

The short answer is: yes. If the technician really wants your vehicle to display a false reading with the first run on the dyno, there are a few ways in which he can gyppo it.

The computer takes variables like outside temperature and barometric pressure into account to determine the engine performance at those levels. Some guys interfere with these readings before they use the dyno and it makes your engine appear weak. But once you've paid for a chip, they change the variables again, and then the performance looks much better.

The computer system that is used on the dyno at Steve's Auto Clinic is a closed system which does not allow for any external interference.

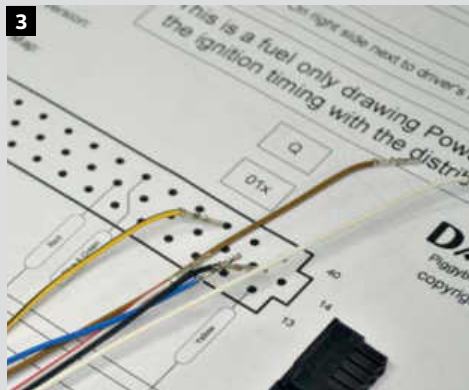
Back to the chip

Steve's Auto Clinic uses the Dastek Unichip, it's a smart chip that can be used on any vehicle. It is not one of the plug-and-play chips and should be installed by a trained technician.

Installing a plug-and-play chip has its advantages. You can do it yourself and take it out when you want to sell your old car and put it into a new one.

However, a Dastek chip has the advantage of being tuned by a technician for what you want to improve on that specific engine's performance. 📺

DO IT LIKE THIS.



1 START AT THE BEGINNING. The first step is to get a base reading on the dyno. The Disco's initial figures – 142 kW and 370 Nm – were enough for me and I didn't consider more power or torque to be necessary. The main aim of the performance chip for me was to improve fuel consumption. This is a common request from people fitting chips: more kilometres per litre, please.

2 GAS IS IMPORTANT. The temperature of the exhaust gas and the unburned fuel in the gas can give a technician a very good idea of the engine's performance. A Lambda sensor is fitted to the exhaust pipe to measure the exhaust gas temperature and the amount of unburned fuel. It is also important because the exhaust temperature should not rise too much while the engine's tuning is altered. And the fuel-air mixture should stay within limits so as not to negatively influence the life of the engine.

3 WIRING. A wiring loom is made for each type of vehicle. The specific wiring only intercepts the signals that are necessary for that engine. For the older Land Rover it is a small loom, but for modern engines it is quite complicated and custom-made looms are provided.

4 CROW'S NEST. The colours of the wires that need to be cut and patched in are shown on the diagram that spells out the composition of the loom. So it is not a total guessing game.

5 REPLACE IT. As soon as the wires are patched in, the connection is plugged back into the ECU and the chip is connected to its loom.

6 ADJUSTMENTS. When the chip is connected to the engine, it is also connected to a computer. While the technician is driving the vehicle on the dyno, he makes adjustments to the chip through the computer program to get the optimal settings for the engine. The exhaust gas temperature and mixture is constantly monitored to make sure the setting doesn't damage the engine.

IF YOU WANT TO HAVE IT DONE

Luckily, when you want to install a performance chip for your vehicle, it won't take all day. The process for a diesel engine can take less than an hour, and a petrol engine usually takes up to two hours. You can sit in the waiting room while your bakkie gets a kick up the backside.

A Dastek Unichip like this one for the Land Rover Discovery 1 V8 costs R3150 with installation and tuning. For a Toyota Hilux D-4D or similar bakkies it costs around R5000 – depending on the engine's computer.

Visit www.steves.co.za to find out where your nearest Steve's Auto Clinic is.



Go to www.tracks4africa.co.za/wegrydriveout.asp for more info.

TRACKS4AFRICA



Ready for an off-road WORKOUT

DORINGBOS 4X4 is a great place to test your abilities, see what your vehicle is capable of and have a *lekker braai* afterwards.

WORDS & PHOTOS: PETER ALLAN LEVEY

Going to Doringbos 4x4 is a little bit like going to the gym. You can start with a nice warm up on an easy trail and then get into some serious heavy lifting on another trail.

Doringbos, formerly known as Riverbank, lies on the banks of the Modder River, just below the wall of the Krugersdrift Dam. It is divided into two main sections, namely the Easy Trail and the Extreme Trail.

As the name suggests, the Easy Trail is suitable for beginners without much off-road driving experience. But the extreme trail is definitely only for drivers who have a good knowledge of 4x4 driving and understand different types of terrain. If you take on the extreme trail, you should be certain of your skills as well as your vehicle's capabilities.

The trails are run by André Botha, an accredited off-road driving trainer. And you can rest assured that any trail under the wing of an experienced trainer like this makes for good practical training and a great driving experience.



GOING DOWN (top left). Make sure you know where the road is as you enter the easy route at this steep descent.

TREAT YOURSELF (top right). Enjoy a braai at the end of an exciting day on the trail

LIFE'S LITTLE LUXURIES (bottom right). The nearby guesthouse has all the facilities for a comfortable stay.

Taking it easy

First, we tackled the Easy Trail as a warm up. This trail starts just below the farm dam at the training venue and follows the Modder River. The trail itself is quite short – only about 2 km – but it demands your full attention. You begin with a steep descent from the farm trail along a track cut into the riverine bush. In dry weather, this descent shouldn't give you any problems (as long as you take care, of course). But after some rain it could prove to be a challenge.

The trail then winds its way towards the river and runs parallel to it for a short distance. Here you'll enjoy some beautiful views of the water and the birdlife in the area.

The next turn takes you away from the water. There's some hard work to be done on the steering wheel to manoeuvre the vehicle around tight corners in the bush. They get cut back and shouldn't scratch your vehicle, but some corners are so tight that it may be necessary to stop and reverse to get around a corner without making contact with the branches.

Although this is the easy route, there are still a few obstacles that are quite testing. A diff-lock would help a lot to overcome them, but there are escape routes. So if you're not feeling too confident about an obstacle, you have the opportunity to take the escape option and continue on the route.

If you get to the end and still want

more, you can turn around and do it again. The trail can be driven in either direction, providing different challenges, depending on how you tackle it.

Running with the big dogs

When we'd finished the Easy Trail, we took a relaxed drive to the start of the Extreme Trail. Along this route, you can see some of the reserve's game like red hartebeest, eland, gemsbok, wildebeest, impala, springbok and zebra. We even saw a herd of seven kudu hiding in a patch of trees along the route.

We soon reached the start of the trail.

It kicked off innocently enough, on the high bank of the Modder River, and we enjoyed some lovely views.

The trail continued along the high river bank for a short distance, before descending into an old eroded area of the property. Here, we were faced with a steep descent with axle twisters at the bottom. Then the road climbed out on the other side to once again confront us with a steep descent, with a turn to the left thrown in for good measure.

After a few more axle twisters, we headed down a shale bank and were faced with the river right in front of >



MAKING WAVES. The river is the ideal place to practice your wading techniques without getting stuck.

us. We headed straight into the water and drove in it for about 50 metres. Then we turned around and headed for a flat rock bank that stood out of the water, where we stopped.

This is a great place to practise how to get the right bow wave in front of your vehicle – which is key to any successful water crossing.

The river bed is made up of rock slabs and has a flat area where there is no danger of getting stuck in the mud. If you had to recover your vehicle here, it would only be in knee-deep water.

We waited for the other vehicles on the trail to join us, and discussed the water section and bow waves. Then we re-entered the water to make the final crossing up a steep rock bank on the other side of the river. There was no danger of wheel spin on the exit though, as a coarse rock surface provided plenty of traction. But the last part of the climb requires careful attention, since there's a part where you have to negotiate a severe axle twister.

The trail then enters a section of the old eroded area, where it almost feels

like you're driving on a slow-motion roller coaster. Obstacles ranging from seemingly insurmountable walls of earth to descents that make you think the vehicle will stand on its nose, follow one after the other.

You need to approach these obstacles with great care. On some of them, you need to make a sharp turn immediately when you reach the top otherwise you'll fall down the other side of a donga.

This is also one of the main reasons why this is a guide-only trail. The guide briefs all newcomers on what lies ahead and gives hints and tips on how to tackle the obstacles.

Anyone who wants to see what their vehicle is capable of, and what their own abilities are, will find out here. You also need to know (or you'll learn quickly!) how to handle vehicle stalls, stall-starts in gear, side slopes, and up-and-downhill turns on uneven ground.

Over the moon

When we were finished with these obstacles, we entered what resembled a lunar landscape with bare mounds of

earth at all angles in front of us. The trail winds its way through this area with some great cross-axle situations that you have to beat, and some steep ascents and descents as well.

Compared to the area we'd just traversed, this section was pretty straightforward. But before long, we were faced with a muddy section where we could get stuck up to our chassis if we didn't cross quickly enough. To make it even more exciting, you have to climb a seemingly vertical wall to get out of the muddy donga.

Soon after, we had to start winding down, since we were out of time. But the route can be extended or shortened according to your group's requirements. And you'll encounter just about every type of obstacle that you could think of on this trail.

Now it was time for a well-deserved cold one at the Doringbos Lapa, a great facility where people gather for a braai around a big fire. We discussed our experience on the trails to our hearts content, exchanging war stories and having a few laughs before heading home. 🍷

NEED TO KNOW

Doringbos gives you the opportunity to test your own and your vehicle's capabilities and to hone your skills. There is the added bonus of game viewing along the route and in the area.

ON THE TRAIL

How long is the route? 20 km (4-5 hours).

Number of vehicles: Minimum 6, maximum 12.

Best time of year? All year round.

Do I get a map? No, the trail is guided.

Will my car get scratched? It's unlikely.

Should I take my running boards off? Definitely, especially for the extreme course.

Should I take a compressor? Yes, you'll have to reduce your tyre pressure for the trails.

Can I turn around halfway? Yes.

Can we have a braai on the route? No, only at the start or end.

Are there ablution facilities for day visitors? Yes.

Can I see game? Yes – kudu, red hartebeest, eland, gemsbok, wildebeest, impala, springbok and zebra.

AROUND THE TRAIL

Best time to go? All year round.

Can I take my family along? Yes.

Just for the day or the weekend? The trails are only open for day visitors who make a prior booking before they can drive them.

What else is there to do?

There are also lots of bird watching opportunities – look out for darters, cormorants, kingfishers, herons and the African fish eagle.

The Florisbad holiday resort, Soetdoring Nature Reserve and Predator Park are in the vicinity. Fishing and hunting can be arranged.

The nearest town? Bloemfontein (30 km).

The nearest filling station? Dealesville (20 km).

How do I get there? André will provide a meeting place and directions when you make your booking. You're not allowed to arrive unannounced and drive the trails.

WHERE TO STAY:

There are rooms that can sleep up to 22 people, available at a guesthouse on the property, with beds that range from bunk beds to a double bed and en-suite and communal bathrooms.

The camping facilities are only available for learners on the 4x4 training course.

Bloemfontein, about 30 km away, has a variety of accommodation.

REMEMBER TO BRING:

Binoculars for game and bird viewing.

Recovery gear.

Compressor.

COST

The trail: R300 per vehicle with a minimum charge of R1 800; 6 vehicles is the usual minimum number, but if a smaller number are prepared to pay the minimum charge they are accepted.

B&B: 6 bedrooms with 2 single beds each: R320 p.p.n.

2 bedrooms with 4 single beds each (2 bunker style): R280 p.p.n.

1 bedroom with 1 double bed: R320 p.p.n.

CONTACT

André Botha

Tel: ☎ 051 446 4187

Cell: ☎ 082 576 6058

✉ just4x4@mweb.co.za

🌐 www.just4x4adventures.co.za



Where the *great dunes* meet the sea

Sandwich Harbour is not one of Namibia's most famous off-road destinations, but without a doubt one of its most memorable, **says ERIC THORBURN.**

Many people have heard of Sandwich Harbour in Namibia, but by the looks of it, very few have ever visited. Perhaps because it's arguably one of the country's most difficult ecological sights to reach.

Sandwich Harbour lies about 45 kilometres south of Walvis Bay in the Namib-Naukluft Park, but the approach is treacherous in the extreme. There isn't

even really a road. Whatever tracks are made are obliterated overnight by the merciless winds and tides.

Pass at your peril

Leaving Walvis Bay, where the salt pans teem with water birds, we approached the "road" to Sandwich Harbour through the dry estuary of the Kuiseb River. The surface seems benign at first glance, but its looks are extremely

deceiving – there are plenty of stories of the estuary trapping unwary or over-confident travellers with its quicksand on many occasions.

Driving through it, you could hit some treacherous dry areas and get your vehicle seriously stuck. Or much worse, you could get yourself into some wet sand, similar to that found in the Makgadikgadi pans in Botswana.

If you are unlucky (or unwary) enough to hit one of these spots, you're in trouble. Your vehicle will break through the dry upper crust and inescapably sink into the liquid chaos of the estuary, from which there is no escape.

I heard an incredible account of one vehicle that disappeared completely. It partially resurfaced some time later, but upside down – only because the air in the tyres provided some buoyancy.

We were lucky enough to negotiate this delta safely, and soon found ourselves on a dramatic desert shoreline. It is a place of true beauty, a scenic wonderland with dramatic changes between the desert and the sea.

The towering dunes are formidable, and drop straight down into the ocean. But it is only from the top that you can appreciate the true extent and beauty of the lagoon and mudflats. The climb is well worth the effort. It is only from here that you get a sense of the isolation that

defines this coast.

If you're planning a visit to this area, make sure that all the vehicles in your convoy are in tip-top working order. We went in a Land Rover and were glad to be in one with a petrol engine. Compared to a diesel Landy, it had much more oomph – something that really helps if you want to summit the steep, high dunes for a beautiful view over the area.

A drive through the graveyard

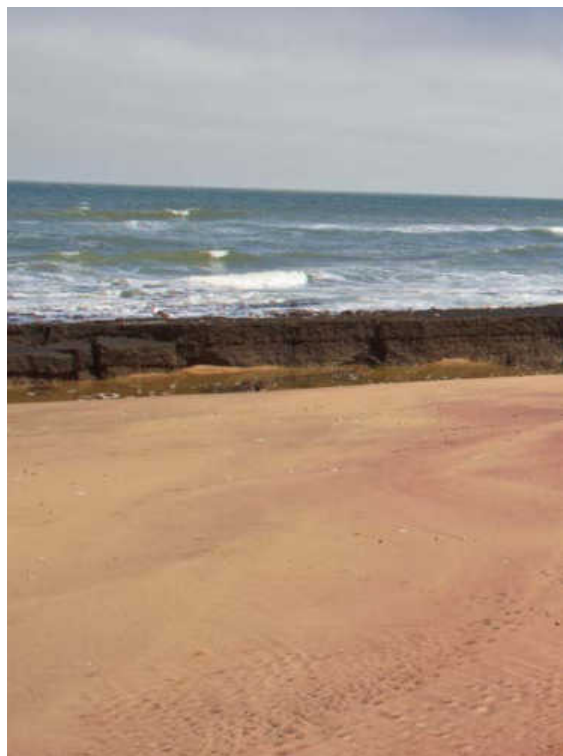
The area around Sandwich Harbour is an area of great ecological significance.

With the dunes rising up to 100 metres into the sky, this is part of the Namib Sand Sea, one of the biggest sand fields in the world.

It was recently proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage site. One of the chief criteria for this distinction is the interesting role that fog plays in helping the plants and animals survive in such an extreme climate. It's the only coastal desert in the world where fog is the primary source of water for the dune fields. This creates a completely unique environment. And it is this environment that we were privileged enough to explore.

When you arrive at the boundary fence of the Namib-Naukluft Park, be aware that only 4x4 vehicles are permitted, that you must be in possession of a permit and that there is no entry at high tide.

Spring tides and the constant remodelling of the towering, wind-sculpted dunes make the route highly unpredictable. You have to drive tight up against the pounding Atlantic. And if you get caught by a rising tide, you could be joining the long list of casualties on this section. It's not called "The Graveyard" for no reason. If your vehicle meets its end here, you can expect no sympathy from your insurance company.



VIEW FROM THE TOP (right). The climb is rewarded with a wonderful view of the lagoon, once the old Sandwich Harbour



Name: Eric Thorburn
Hometown: Sandton
Occupation: Retired dentist
Favourite places: Drakensberg, the Bushveld and the Transkei Wild Coast.
Your next destination? Mana Pools, Kariba and Hwange, via Botswana to avoid Beit Bridge.



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proclaimed Ramsar site (Ramsar is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands).

Together with the Walvis Bay wetlands, it's regarded by many as one of the top 3 birding sites in Africa.

The harbour is now a tidal lagoon, where the advance of the dunes is held back by reed beds at their base. These reed beds and pools are fed by brackish freshwater springs, which in turn are fed from an aquifer below the Namib.

This unique feature has become a haven for thousands of birds, as well as an important stop-over point for migrant birds. A recent survey included a count of 34 different species, as well as 40 000 birds which include flamingo, pelican, avocet, turnstone, damara tern and the endemic dune lark. The area also has a huge variety of smaller waders. In addition, it is not uncommon to see jackal trotting along the beach, or dolphins swimming just off shore.

An added bonus between July and November would be the sighting of



Nature 1, Civilisation 0

Sandwich Harbour has swallowed more than just a few cars in its time. Many of civilisation's big endeavours have met their fate here.

It has a colourful history that goes back to 1486. A Portuguese navigator, Diogo Cão, first named it Porto d'Ilheo, but the area was later renamed "Sandwich", possibly after the HMS Sandwich, a gunship that reportedly came to a bad end here in 1792.

In the 18th century, this precious fresh water source on Namibia's wild, windswept coast became a port for whaling, sealing and trading. Apparently, the indigenous people even drove cattle across the desert to trade for glass, beads and supplies from people at the port.

However, over time the winds and tides reclaimed their own and the harbour silted up.

All that remains of these undertakings today is a solitary ruined building. And in place of civilization's scars is a unique coastal wetland.

It is now a designated Wetland of International Importance, world famous for its abundant birdlife, and a



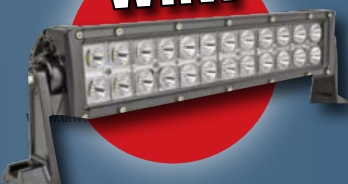
PERILOUS SHORES (top centre). Access is restricted to low tide only.

PRETTY IN PINK (above). Flamingos feed in the nutrient rich lagoon

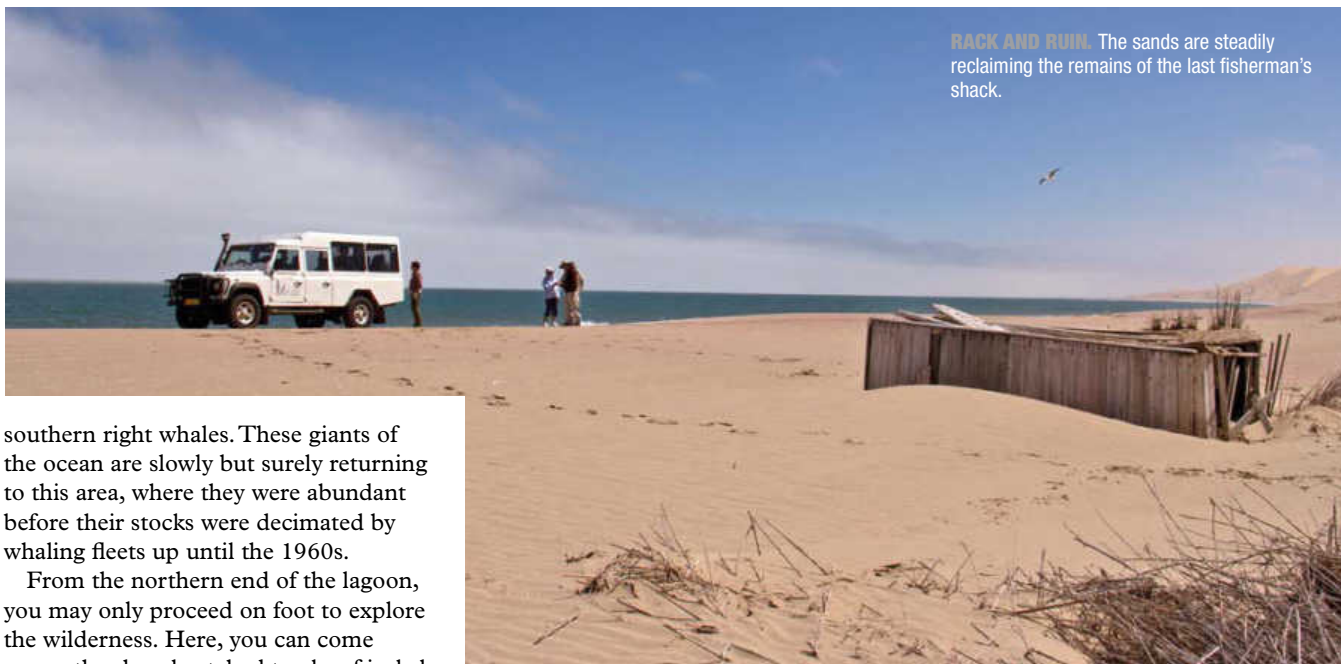


HOME IS WHERE THE SAND IS (bottom). The unique shovel-snouted lizard which calls these dunes home

WIN!



Eric Thorburn wins a Mad Rhino MRO-3072 Light Bar worth R2329. MRO has a complete range of LED lights for all applications, which come with a two year warranty. Opposite Lock is the exclusive distributor of Mad Rhino-LED lighting. Opposite Lock stocks award-winning 4x4 accessories and equipment including Tough Dog suspension systems, Lightforce spot lights, OL-bumpers, VRS-winch, recovery gear and more.



RACK AND RUIN. The sands are steadily reclaiming the remains of the last fisherman's shack.

southern right whales. These giants of the ocean are slowly but surely returning to this area, where they were abundant before their stocks were decimated by whaling fleets up until the 1960s.

From the northern end of the lagoon, you may only proceed on foot to explore the wilderness. Here, you can come across the sharply etched tracks of jackal in the wet sand, or get a rare glimpse of a shovel-snouted lizard.

Our guide, Bruno, showed us how to spot these tiny creatures moving just below the sand, and how to scoop one out with your hand. It was very exciting!

You also find geckos and beetles everywhere, as well as the prickly *Inara* plants, whose fruit (called a *Inara* melon) is essential as a food source for the local Topnaar people (a clan of the Nama people).

Just inland, we came upon a small herd of Springbok that quench their thirst from the plants they eat. Remarkably, all this life in the desert is sustained by the moisture-laden fog that sweeps in off the icy Benguela current at night, which then condenses to provide life-supporting water to the dry Namib.

The end, but not the end

All too soon we had to leave this magical

The surface seems benign at first glance, but its looks are extremely deceiving.

place before the rising tide could trap us. But it was not the end yet. It was time for some excitement on our way home.

We tackled the dunes with our 4x4s and played like children in the sand. No words can fully describe the feeling of driving in such incredible dunes. You drop down seemingly impossible slopes with your heart in your mouth. Then you accelerate quickly to crest the next summit. The adrenaline pumps through your veins and your pulse soars.

What thrill could be better for a 4x4 enthusiast than being in a vehicle edging slowly down a sheer slip face and

hearing the dune sand roar a greeting to you in response?

As the sun starts to sink slowly in the west, drive to the top of that last dune. Sit still, just for a while, crack open something cold and let the wind ruffle your hair as you absorb the stark beauty of this place.

A final criterion of the UNESCO award was that this is a place “where atmospheric conditions provide exceptional visibility of the landscape by day and the dazzling southern hemisphere sky at night”.

I agree. ✉

I WANT TO GO TOO!

Buy a permit in advance from Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Swakopmund or Walvis Bay.

Check the tides (at www.satides.co.za), and the fine print of your vehicle's insurance!

Bring recovery equipment and make sure you know how to use it.

Consider a guide. Even if you are an experienced 4x4 driver and comfortable with deep sand driving, it might be a good idea to team up with a local tour guide, at least for your first trip. It may sound expensive, but driving with a tour operator in their vehicle definitely has its advantages. In fact, the major tour operators in the area won't provide guides for self-drive tourists because they consider the risks too high. It costs around R1 300 for a full day's tour, but it means you can relax and enjoy

the experience, have the history brought to life, and be free to see and photograph the wildlife and climb the dunes. You can book both half or full-day excursions.

An added advantage of doing so, is that after visiting the harbour, your guide will know where you can go dune driving and, more importantly, where it's safe to go.

We went with Bruno Nebe of Turnstone Tours, who was charming and full of information: 📞 www.turnstone-tours.com; ☎ +264 64 403 123; ✉ turn@iafrica.com.na.

Other operators include: Mola Mola Tours 📞 info@mola-namibia.com; ☎ +264 64 205 511.

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The team at the Kennis Safari Centre division have identified the need for more off-road caravans, and particularly the need to be able to move around freely inside your caravan, especially if you plan on trekking across the continent. Therefore the team has taken the existing Sprite Sprint model and developed it into an exciting new product: the Sprite Sprint BacTrax.

This tough caravan boasts a heavy-duty axle, large 15 inch wheels and modifications to the caravan's body protection components to ensure that it can withstand even the toughest gravel roads.

A key feature of the Sprite Sprint BacTrax is the intelligent layout that allows you to move around your double bed. It also has a single bed for a third person that can double up as a dining nook.

The Sprite Sprint BacTrax has a 12V charging system to keep your Waeco or Engel fridge on and your beers cold, and with cooking and wash-up facilities on the outside, the Sprite Sprint

BacTrax is the ideal travel companion for the family braai master.

Let the team take care of all your off-road caravan and camping needs.



For more info, contact Kennis Caravans & Motorhomes on ☎ (011) 664 7000 or visit 🌐 www.kennis.co.za.

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Hennops Offroad Trails is situated along the banks of the Hennops River, only a few minutes' drive from the Hartebeespoort Dam. Experienced drivers can look forward to a wide variety of obstacles on the off-road trail, which include muddy holes, steep rocky climbs, challenging descents and dongas. Rookie

drivers can give tricky obstacles a miss by taking one of the existing tracks or service roads.

The new Klipdrift off-road trail is open to the public by prior arrangement only, and is the perfect group activity for four or more vehicles. Just remember to pack your recovery gear, should you get in a pickle on the way.

Nature lovers can admire the fauna along the route, as Hennops Offroad Trails is situated in a 200 hectare game farm that boasts herds of zebra, blue wildebeest and kudu. For the more active family members, Hennops Offroad Trails has three hiking routes that range between

2,5 km and 11,3 km in length and adventurous mountain bikers are welcome to try out the 16 km mountain bike trail.

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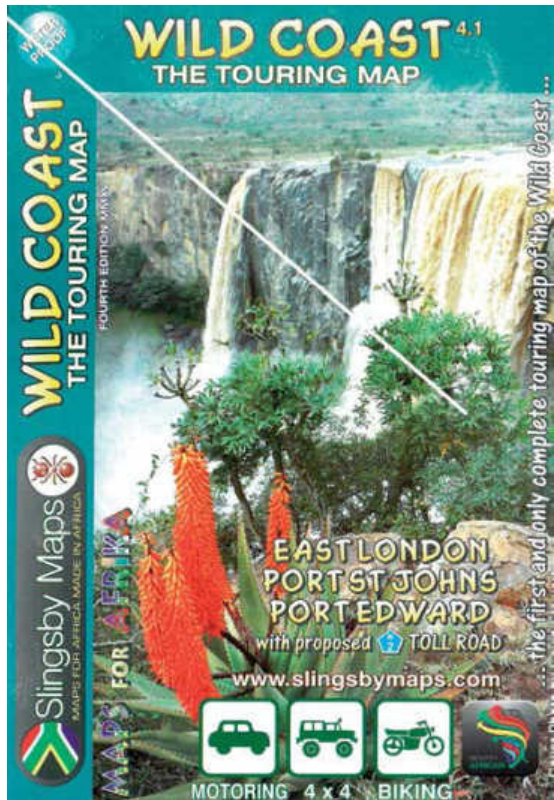
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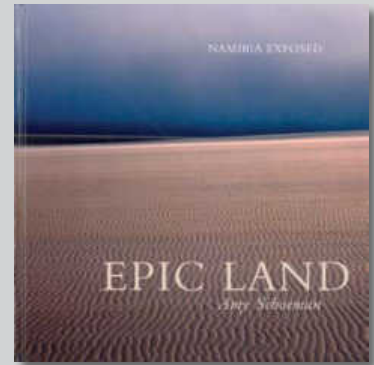
The Wild Coast is one of the prettiest coast lines in South Africa, though not one of the easiest to tour. The state of the roads is alarming, road signs are scarce and night driving is a nightmare. Because of this, Peter Slingsby's Wild Coast map has been a Bible for countless people that visit this coast. He didn't sell out all 14 000 of them for no reason.

The latest edition, number 4, is roughly a third bigger than the previous one and has a host of valuable updates. For example, it now has a list of more than 200 rivers, river mouths and waterfalls as well as the distance between them. The map lists shipwrecks, displays new and tarred roads and includes the growth of popular places like Coffee Bay, Port St Johns, Chintsa, Kei Mouth and Morgan Bay. Plus it's waterproof!

More than that, the roads are divided into 10 categories, from free-ways to small gravel roads, and there are GPS coordinates for intersections. But one of the cleverest aspects of the map is the use of landmarks along the road in places where Slingsby knows that there are scarcely any road signs. Thus you can focus on the animals crossing the road rather than looking out for a sign that's been rusting away since 1982.

– Charles Thompson

The images are something special, even if your Landie isn't full of dream catchers.



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Don't let the price of the photography book, *Epic Land*, scare you off – it's worth every cent. This beautiful coffee table book is the product of 35 years of travel right across Namibia by the photographer and journalist Amy Schoeman.

Schoeman has a special passion for the Skeleton Coast, Kaokoland and Damaraland. She's travelled for 16 years in this part of Namibia.

Through the years, Louw has documented every part of the Skeleton Coast in her photos – from the smallest crab to the kilometre-long dunes and many shipwrecks. Her love for the environment stands out in a section of nearly 30 pages dedicated to this part of Namibia.

The book is divided into six "portfolios", with pictures that range from beautiful travel photos to seriously artistic close-up shots of things like rock textures and sand. But some of the photos are also abstract creative offerings – for example, she dedicates a whole section to kaleidoscopic photo experiments that she made on her computer. It sounds like you need to be smoking something to appreciate this section, but the images are something special, even if your Landie isn't full of dream catchers. If you've ever travelled to Namibia, you'll recognise many of its landmarks. If not, this book will be the spark to light your engine's fire.

– Charles Thompson



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A trip to the bush without a group photo is like a soft-serve ice cream without a Flake. Because you just can't come home without a snapshot of your family and friends. For me, it is these kinds of photos that bring back the best memories.



IF YOU FOLLOW THESE FOUR STEPS, YOUR GROUP PHOTOS WILL BE SOMETHING TO BRAG ABOUT:

STEP 1: Watch out for the sun

The best time for a group photo is at dusk. At this time of day, everyone is usually standing around with a drink in hand, and your “subjects” are nice and relaxed. But that is not the primary reason. At sunset the light is not so sharp and you don't have to worry about people squinting at the camera as in bright sunlight. Aim for about 15 to 20 minutes after the sun has set, when the background light has a beautiful purple or orange colour.

STEP 2: Switch to manual

First get the background right. Change to manual mode on your camera; choose a relatively high ISO value (between 800 and 1600) and a low f-stop (between f/3.2 and f/5.6). Take a practice shot with a shutter speed of 1/200 seconds. Ten to one, the people in the photo will just be silhouettes in the foreground, but you'll correct this later with a flash. If the background is too dark, choose a slower shutter speed. If it is too bright, choose a faster shutter speed. It's this step that ensures that the background will appear as purple or orange behind your subjects. The low f-stop ensures that the depth of field is shallow so that the back-




ground appears nice and blurred. Everyone should be in focus if they are standing next to each other, instead of slightly in front or behind one another. If there are a few people sitting on the ground in front, increase the f-stop slightly so that everyone will be in focus.

STEP 3: Use a flash

Now that you've used manual mode to prepare for the background by choosing the right ISO, f-stop and shutter speed, you have to illuminate the people with a flash. You can either use the camera's built-in flash or an external one. Once again, take a practice shot. If the people appear too dark, set the flash to be brighter using the Flash Exposure Compensation function. If the people come out too brightly now, set the flash just a touch softer.

STEP 4: Put on your running shoes

You'll regret not being in a great group photo. So put your camera on a tripod, activate the 10 second timer and run so that you can smile alongside your loved ones. Just make sure they leave a gap open for you, otherwise the photo can easily look unbalanced. 



VILLIERS' TIP:

Group photos don't have to be posed for all the time. Make a point of taking unplanned shots of the people travelling with you now and then. These types of unexpected photos are often much more natural, and allow you to capture great facial expressions.

Download Villiers wildlife photography app, *Learn by Example – Wildlife Photography*, today on your smart phone, iPad or tablet and learn how to take superior animal pictures. Available on iTunes and the Google Play Store.

Who's the boss of the BRAAI SPICES?

Have you ever stood in front of the braai spices in a supermarket and just scratched your head? Well, that's why we picked 12 candidates and put them to the taste test.

Photos: Evan Naude

A successful braai involves more than just hot coals and good meat. You also need pleasant company, something refreshing to drink – as well as the right salt and spices for the meat, or it will taste rather bland.

And let's forget about all the sauces and marinades that some people practically drown their meat in nowadays. Good meat doesn't need it. Because all you really need is a bit of salt – and, at most, one or two other flavours.

Over the years, salt has started to make way for “braai salt” and a host of other spices that are available for the adventurous braaier. There are so many options that it can be overwhelming. But how do they taste? To answer that question, three of us sat down with some juicy venison boerewors, as well as a selection of 12 braai salts and spices that are commonly available at most South African supermarkets.





1 SALT OF THE EARTH

Cerebos Salt

BACKGROUND: Most of us have grown up with this salt. In fact, rumour has it that this was why the Zulus attacked the British at Isandlwana in 1879 – because they heard a rumour that the Brits had some really tasty stuff they chucked over their meat and they wanted some too.

EVAN: I don't really eat salt on my food, but when I taste it I start feeling like some tequila.

CHARLES: It brings the meat's natural flavour to the fore. It's not overpowering and compliments the meat.

JACO: I'm getting a bit emotional here, just tasting the simple combination of good meat and a bit of salt.

THEY SAY: "See how it runs".

WE SAY: This one is not to be scoffed at.

2 AGENT ORANGE

Marina Braai Salt

BACKGROUND: They call it "the original braai salt." And just to make sure you don't doubt their claim, they own the URL www.salt.co.za.

EVAN: Jeez, but it's salty. It actually tastes like the poor man's Aromat.

CHARLES: It tastes just as artificial as the container. And the crystals are huge. How will it stay on woks and not roll off? *(The crystals really are huge. – Jaco)*

JACO: The advantage of this is that you can use the orange bottle as an emergency beacon at sea. The strong taste (which doesn't come across as natural at all) will scare off the sharks.

THEY SAY: "An exciting flavour for braais and a family favourite in the kitchen."

WE SAY: Only if you're not scared of salt.

3 THIS TANNIE IS TERRIFIC

Ina Paarman's Braai & Grill

BACKGROUND: Tannie Ina has become well-known for her spices. Not only do they taste good, but they're known for the fact that they're not made with lots of nasty chemicals and artificial flavouring.

EVAN: You can taste everything you see on the label. That takes some doing.

CHARLES: I have some of this at home too. It's nicely balanced and something you can rely on.

JACO: I can actually taste the sundried tomatoes. The quality is palatable with an absence of chemicals. That's why I highly rate Tannie Ina.

THEY SAY: "Not only for braais, but also for garlic bread."

WE SAY: This is our favourite, especially if you consider yourself a connoisseur.

4 YOUNG TURK

Cerebos Braai Salt

BACKGROUND: Even Cerebos jumped onto the braai salt bandwagon. We are rather amused. If you can't beat 'em...

EVAN: Paprika, celery... After this tasting we won't have any taste buds left. But it might be lekker on the crisped skin of braaied chicken.

CHARLES: It's nice in the same way as Fizzers – you know it isn't healthy, but you can't stop eating it.

JACO: It tastes like a new flavour of Aromat.

THEY SAY: "Shake on steak, rock on ribs, blast on boerewors, hit on a hamburger for flame grilled great taste!"

WE SAY: The flavour is quite overpowering, so it will work quite well for pork and chicken. But you won't want to use it on prime cuts.





5 YOUNG TURK II

Cerebos Flame Grilled Barbecue Seasoning

BACKGROUND: Another product from Cerebos. It's okay, as long as they keep making normal salt.

EVAN: This is noticeably sweeter than the Cerebos Braai Salt. In fact, it tastes like... "barbecue" seasoning. But a barbecue is a far cry from a braai.

CHARLES: At first it's saltier than expected. Then the spicy taste comes in a bit later.

JACO: The black flakes in the seasoning are noticeable. I wonder what it is, because it sure as hell isn't pepper.

THEY SAY: "Gives vim to veggies, stick to steaks, a boost to boerewors and a pep to potatoes."

WE SAY: If they spent as much time on the flavour as they did on the catch phrases they might have had a winner.

6 RED ALERT

Robertson's Barbecue Spice

BACKGROUND: Robertson's was synonymous with spices long before Chef Reuben Riffel was a twinkle in his dad's eye. Many of us grew up with Naas Botha at fly half, two years national service and Robertson's Steak and Chops spice.

EVAN: Phew, one will have to be careful with this one...

CHARLES: I like the burning taste ... (then starts coughing hysterically). Jeez, you should first ask your guests if they like spices before chucking this stuff over everything.

JACO: The label says it's manufactured in La Lucia, outside Durban. So you can understand the almost Indian approach to chillies in this one. Hell, but the chillies command your attention with this baby.

THEY SAY: Not a lot.

WE SAY: Because the chillies do the talking.

7 SURPRISE, SPUR SPICE...

Spur Meat Spice

BACKGROUND: They're known for their family restaurants, but have recently branched out into sauces and spices under the same brand.

EVAN: The pepper is quite noticeable.

CHARLES: It's a surprisingly pleasant combination of tastes.

JACO: It has quite a complex flavour, but the pepper is pleasant, without overpowering everything.

THEY SAY: "Ideal to enhance the taste of meat." And to top it off, it's also "Low Fat" ... and has a list of ingredients longer than the Great Wall of China.

WE SAY: We don't want to knock Spur, but they're not exactly a Michelin starred restaurant. So we were pleasantly surprised by the taste of this spice. Good work!

8 LOUD MOUTH

Shake Me! Braai Salt

BACKGROUND: If the packaging was a person, we'd say they are an extrovert – with a list of flavours that includes paprika, black pepper, coriander and garlic. This looks promising.

EVAN: I'd have to take their word for it that there's paprika in the stuff, because there's no way that I can taste it.

CHARLES: Initially it tastes like Aromat, but eventually it fizzles out to a weak pepper taste.

JACO: I taste none of the above mentioned flavours. So it's basically an expensive salt.

THEY SAY: "No MSG, preservatives or colourants."

WE SAY: They might use the pay-off line "Shake me!", but we didn't feel the earth moving.





9 THE LEGEND

Aromat Original Seasoning

BACKGROUND: This is the original, glow-in-the-dark, MSG laden, chemical weapon of mass destruction.

EVAN: Spices should taste like Ina Paarman's stuff, where you can identify the ingredients. With Aromat, you just don't know what's in it.

CHARLES: It looks artificial, especially the radioactive yellow colour. You don't know what the ingredients are, but surprisingly enough it really tastes delicious.

JACO: I can't believe I'm saying this, but it has a surprisingly complex taste in comparison with the fancier-sounding competitors. It was a pleasant surprise, even though we were sceptical.

THEY SAY: "Aromat Seasoning." Enough said.

WE SAY: They don't need to be quite so humble.

10 MOUTHFUL OF BRAAI MIX

Robertson's Traditional Braai Mix

BACKGROUND: Any braai spice that lays claim to the title "Traditional" must be very sure about itself.

EVAN: This spice should have begun with its spicy aftertaste, because the initial impression is sweet and weak.

CHARLES: Braai spices shouldn't be sweet. *(And neither should braaiers. – Jaco)*

JACO: At first it is sweet, then there's a bit of spicy stuff coming through, before ending quite hot. A lot like that girl at choir camp in Matric.

THEY SAY: "Master blends for braai" and "Traditional Braai Mix." Those are quite bold statements.

WE SAY: They might have overestimated their skills with this one.

11 JIMMY ABBOTT, HEAVY WEIGHT

Jimmy's Braai Salt (500g)

BACKGROUND: Everybody knows Jimmy's braai sauces and marinades. Very sophisticated tastes they aren't, but they remain quite popular. So how will their braai salt taste?

EVAN: Jeez, but the container is as big as a bottle of drain cleaner!

CHARLES: The holes on top are as big as man holes! And judging by the taste they should rather have named it Jimmy's Salt & Garlic.

JACO: Forget about the long list of ingredients: All that you taste is salt and garlic.

THEY SAY: "The original, most versatile."

WE SAY: If you're not easily intimidated by salt and garlic.

12 ANONYMOUS CONTENDER

Pick 'n Pay Barbeque Spice

BACKGROUND: In a moment of compulsive madness we chucked this product into our shopping basket. How will it fare?

EVAN: It tastes like there's way too much artificial flavouring in here.

CHARLES: It smells like coffee – and dust.

JACO: I smell chocolate milkshake, but it tastes surprisingly salty.

THEY SAY: One of the ingredients is "nature identical flavourant (smoke)."

WE SAY: Even though we can smell the "smoke" flavour it's close, but no cigar.





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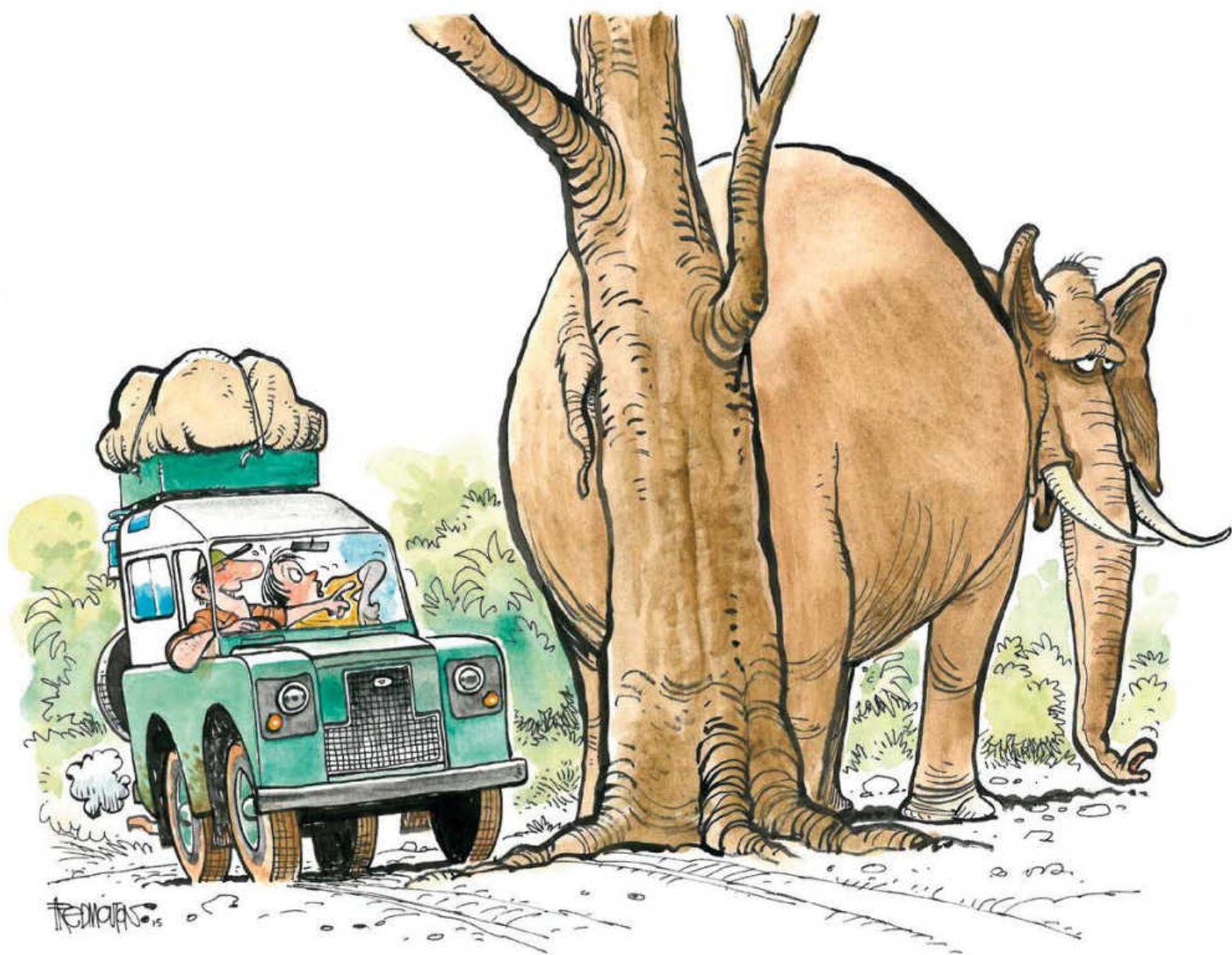
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Ginger and The Cow

The only way to handle annoying people on a bush trip is to be even more annoying, says **CAF, THE RELUCTANT ADVENTURER.**

While I was growing up, I always wanted to be either a marine biologist or a thoughtful, but adventurous, overland explorer. Sort of a cross between David Attenborough and Indiana Jones.

The marine biology idea quickly went out the window when my best friend, Angela, and I went on our

very first snorkelling trip to Umdloti. My mask steamed up, I got water in my snorkel and I panicked. I started thrashing around with my flippers until I disappeared in a maelstrom of froth and bits of seaweed.

I had to be assisted (okay, dragged) back to the shallows where I flopped about, dramatically retching, choking and trying to attract as much attention and sympathy as possible.

Undeterred by my aquatic incompetence, I decided to give overland adventuring a go. I persuaded Angela to join me, and signed up for a three-week guided 4x4 trip in Botswana.

There were about eight of us in the group and we had two guides. I don't remember either of their names, so I shall call him Ginger and her The Cow because, well, she was, and she was also quite stupid.

Evidence of this soon came to light, when she had fits about things like people talking. Look, if you and your best friend are strolling along chatting and laughing, how are you supposed to hear someone creeping around at the back of the group whispering for you both to shut up?

Eventually, of course, The Cow would completely lose her temper, come crashing past everyone and hiss in our faces for the two of us to “Just shut it, for Pete’s sake!”

When she lost her temper, she had one of the most mobile faces I’d ever seen. Her eyes bulged and her features seemed to slide all over the place. In the end, Angela and I deliberately tried to irritate her, just so we could watch her lose her temper and “throw a Picasso”.

She could be very scary though. I remember one time I nearly fainted, dropping my sandwich, slopping my tea and burning my mouth quite badly, when she snuck up behind me and roared: “CAF, AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT, DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE SNAKE BITE KIT IS?”

When I said I didn’t, she had another hissy fit. It was completely unnecessary because, as I explained, even if I had known where it was, I didn’t have a clue how to use it.

She did the same thing to Angela, stealing up behind her and bellowing in her ear: “ANGELA, CANYOU SHOW ME WHERE AND HOW YOU WOULD CLAMP SOMEONE’S GROIN TO PREVENT THEM BLEEDING OUT THROUGH THE FEMORAL ARTERY?”

Thankfully, bleeding out through the femoral artery is not a common camping complaint like, for example, a stress headache or damp knickers from misjudging the long drop. I mean, just imagine, “I’m so sorry darling, you’re going to have to make the garlic bread tonight, I think my femoral artery is about to blow again.”

I just thought I should clarify that. Anyway, moving on.

To make matters worse, we couldn’t drink and we hardly ate. We’d sit there at night clutching a warm Coke and a tiny bit of steak because a) we didn’t want to have to get up in the night for a pee and b) because it’s never just one glass of wine, is it? Before you know it, you’ve had a bottle each and you’re tripping around in the bush, shushing each other, giggling and waving tomorrow’s braai

meat around, calling “Here Kitty, kitty.” Some things are just not worth it.

The final straw came when The Cow informed us that nuts were the most useful type of food to carry. If you awoke to the sounds of predators moving around in the morning, or if you didn’t have time to start a fire and needed to “crack on”, nuts made the perfect breakfast, she explained. They contained plenty of protein and the smell wasn’t likely to attract attention.

Personally, if I ever woke up to the sounds of predators moving around I would be too busy whimpering and pawing at the bottom of the nearest tree to worry about breakfast. Also, as Angela pointed out, what about squirrels? Surely they could issue a nasty bite if hungry? I’m not even sure if you get squirrels in Botswana, but her comment irritated The Cow, which was great.

After about a week, the novelty started to wear off. I started to whine about fatigue, headaches, possible dehydration

The Cow took great delight in pointing out that the cheetah had been on MY side of the vehicle, and that if I stopped chatting for a while and paid attention I might actually spot some game. I retaliated by sulking and staring fixedly out of my side of the vehicle. I had intended to ignore everyone for the rest of the drive, but I didn’t because I spotted a pride of lions which The Cow had missed, so I decided to start showing off instead.

Since then I have always adopted this game viewing tactic. It works fairly well, but if you’re competitive like I am, it can get a bit irritating. Larry always drives, so he scans the front and both sides of the road. He also has much quicker eyes than I do, and more knowledge, so he’s usually spotted and identified an animal before I’ve even sighted it through my binocs. Very annoying.

And there is another drawback. If, for example, an elephant is standing behind a tree with his back to the road, by the

If I ever woke up to the sounds of predators I would be too busy whimpering and pawing at the bottom of the nearest tree to worry about breakfast.

and general malaise. When no one, not even Angela, was particularly sympathetic, I escalated tensions and began complaining about suspected malaria or dengue fever. I adopted a moaning noise and stumbling limp whenever I thought anyone was looking.

Eventually Ginger got thoroughly sick of me and asked The Cow to take Angela and me for a game drive, while the rest of the party hiked to some distant tree or waterhole or boring, but significant, lump in the ground.

The drive was lovely. Angela and I sat chatting and enjoying the cool breeze through our hair. Then we met up with another group who asked if we’d seen the cheetah sighting. We said we hadn’t and they gave us detailed instructions on where to look. We retraced our steps, and sure enough, there was a mother cheetah and her two cubs.

time I see it I’m basically staring straight up its arse. Or, to be more poetic, “gazing into the great unknown”.

Then, before I’ve even worked out what I’m seeing, the aforementioned elephant is already chasing us down the road, and Larry, his face pouring with sweat and his foot flat on the accelerator, is wondering aloud how “someone” can fail to spot an animal the size of a large ###ling shed a few metres off the road.

Getting back to our Botswana trip, I wasn’t sad to see the end of that holiday, especially The Cow. She had certainly never heard about the customer always being right. When Angela and I got back to Durban, I turned my back on adventure, took up typing and went to work in an office, and only ventured back to the wild again after meeting the unsuspecting Larry. 📺

OOPS!

When it rains in the Kalahari

Never think that you can't get stuck in the arid Kalahari. A quick downpour might just leave you with egg on your face.



HIGH HOPES. Cobus looks on from the bakkie as Rian Robbeson from Pretoria (left) and Dewald Kamffer from Duiwelskloof struggle to free it.



MUCKING ABOUT By 14:00 in the afternoon Dewald Kamffer was covered from head to toe in mud, but the Toyota was still bogged down.

Since retiring, I earn a living as an heritage consultant. In October last year three colleagues and I did an impact study in the Kalahari for a power line which ran past Groblershoop and Grootdrink.

One night there was a heavy downpour. We heard the next morning that it was 25 mm of rain.

However, it was a beautiful day and we headed into the veld with our Toyota 3000 KZ TE 4x4. There was work that needed to be done.

A large puddle of water appeared ahead of us on the jeep track, but we pushed through. I took a photo and the work continued without a hitch. On the way back through the puddle however, the bakkie gave a single cough, and there it sat. We pushed it back and forth and even used the hi-lift jack, but to no avail. The wheels kept spinning and it got more and more stuck in the sticky mud.

It was around ten in the morning and we were in hysterics, to say the least. To think, we were stuck in mud in the arid Kalahari!

By two o'clock it wasn't so funny anymore. The ground around the bakkie was a soggy mess and the guys were covered in mud from head to toe. Calling for assistance wouldn't even help, because how do you explain exactly where you are when you're in the middle of nowhere?

Eventually we decided that half the team should continue with the work on foot, while the other two walked the four kilometres to the tar road and hitched a ride to our other bakkie – 30 km's away.

We eventually got the bakkie out of the mud, but only by four in the afternoon. And now we know not to take rain in the Kalahari lightly! (I hope Cobus doesn't need his prize – a shovel – anytime soon – Jaco).

COBUS DREYER,
Bloemfontein

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